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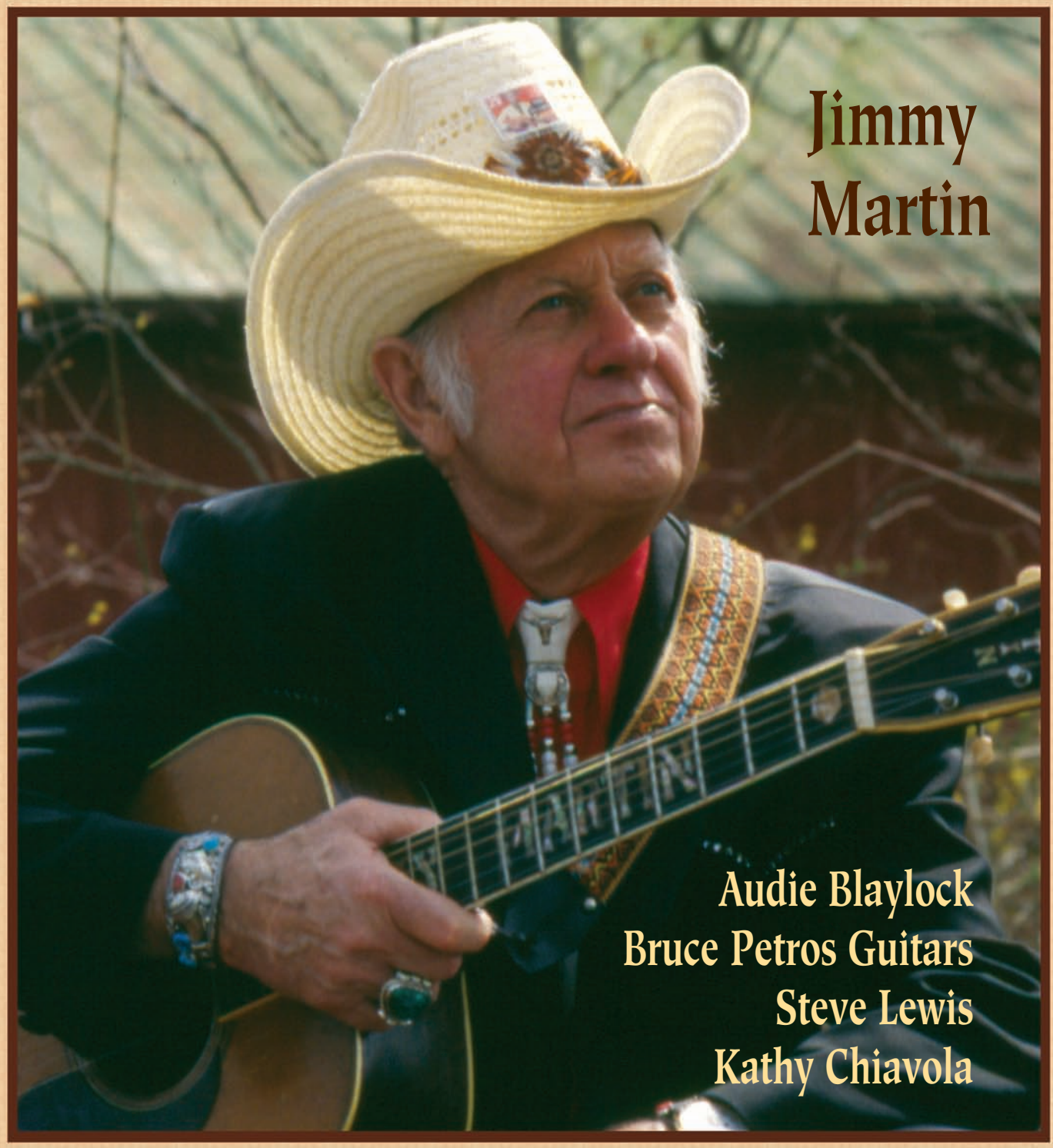
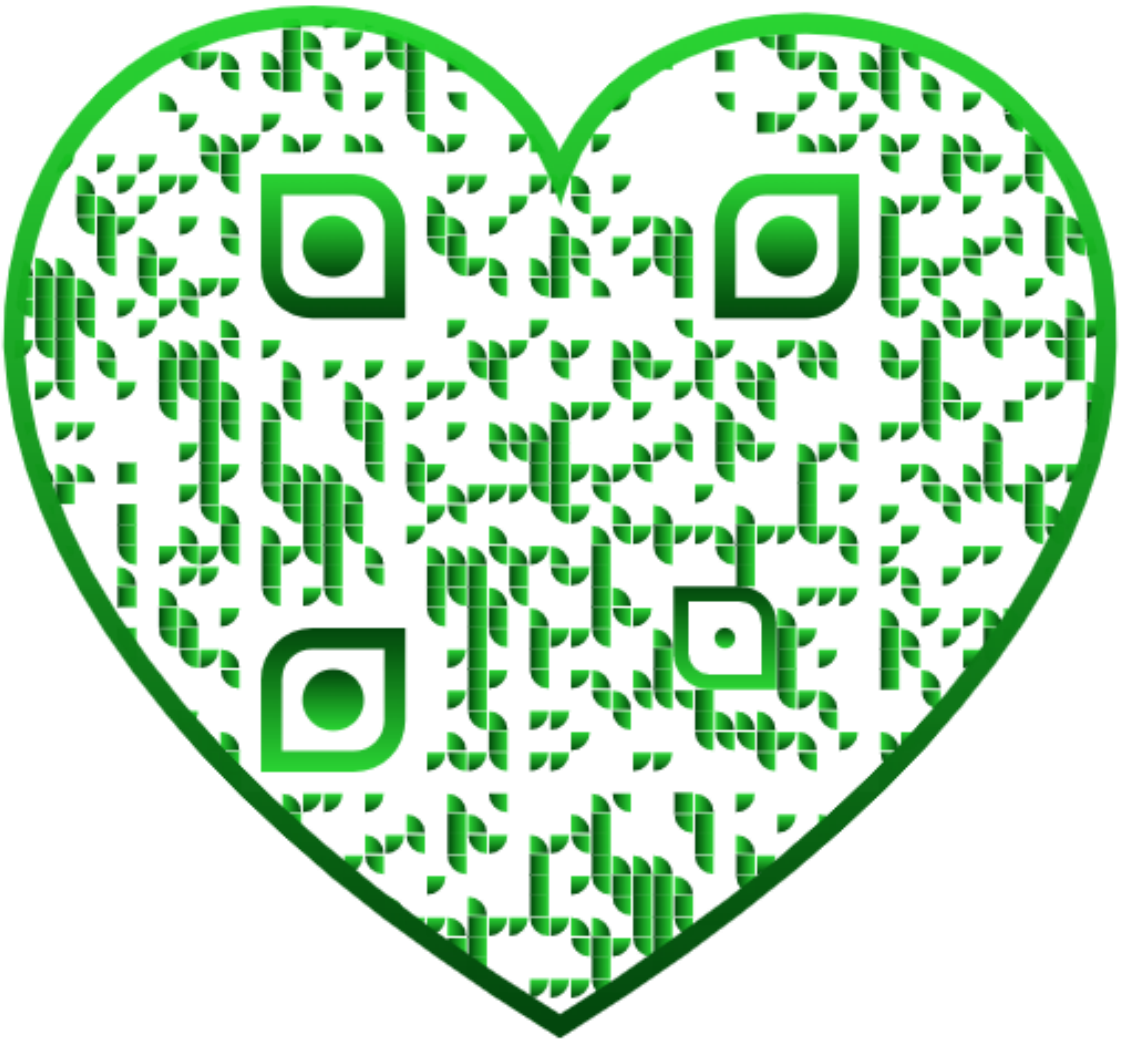
Volume 8, Number 1 November/December 2003





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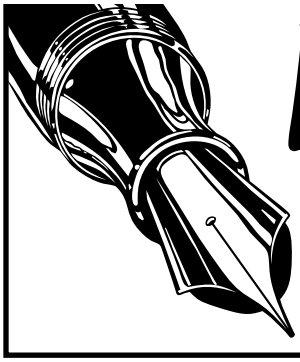


EDITOR'S PAGE

Jimmy Martin Issue

Welcome to the Jimmy Martin Rhythm Guitar issue. When we scheduled to have Jimmy Martin on this issue's cover I wrote to all of the contributors and asked that they all consider writing something about rhythm guitar. The majority of them have submitted something pertaining to rhythm guitar. I hope you will all enjoy working on improving your rhythm skills over the next two months.

Congratulations, Chris Jones

Columnist Chris Jones has not submitted an article for this issue because he has been busy helping his wife Sally take care of their new twins. Congratulations Chris and Sally!

Flatpicking 2003

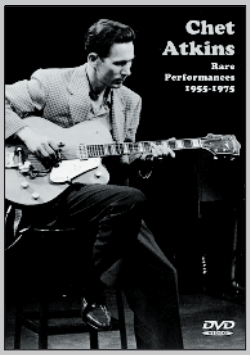
The release of our new CD *Flatpicking Favorites: Hot & Spicy* has pushed back the release of our *Flatpicking 2003* annual sampler CD. We are working on it though and will have it out by the first part of December. Check the website.

Hurst, Sutton, & Stafford

In addition to the release of our *Flatpicking Favorites* CD, the new *Hurst, Sutton, & Stafford Live in Nashville* DVD and VHS video has also been released. For more information see the ad on page 19 of this issue.

Correction

In the last issue we had a problem with the tab in Adam Granger's column. Adam called to tell me that the notes on the high E string were correct, however, all of the other notes are one line (string) off. If you take all the other number and move them down one line, it should be right.



Chet Atkins
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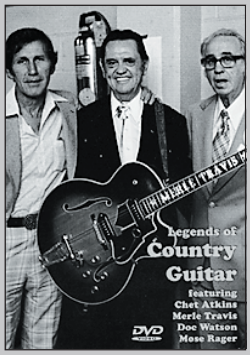

Legends of Country Guitar
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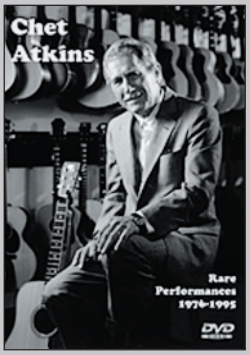

Chet Atkins
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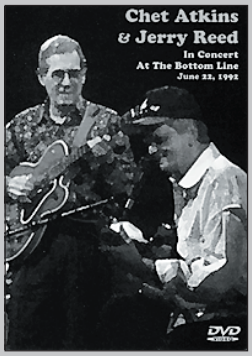

Chet Atkins & Jerry Reed
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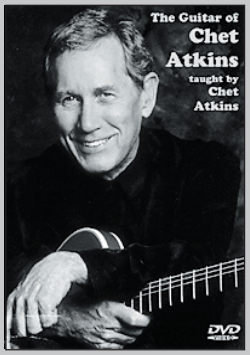

The Guitar of Chet Atkins
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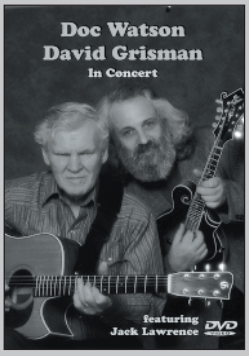

Doc Watson & David Grisman
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Doc's Guitar Jam
Watson/Rice/Crary/Kaufman
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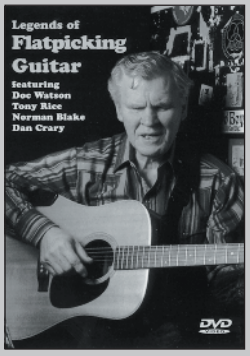

Legends of Flatpicking Guitar
Watson/Rice/Blake/Crary
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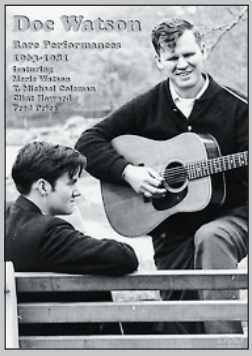

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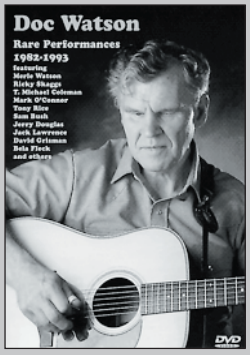

Doc Watson
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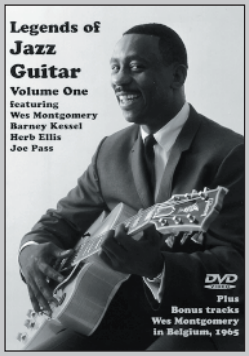

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Legends of Jazz Guitar #2
Montgomery/Kessel/Burrell...
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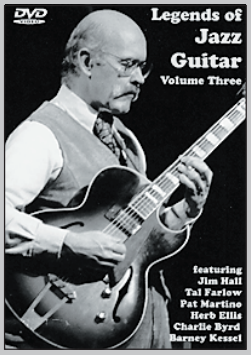

Legends of Jazz Guitar #3
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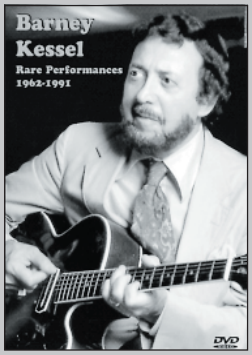

Barney Kessel
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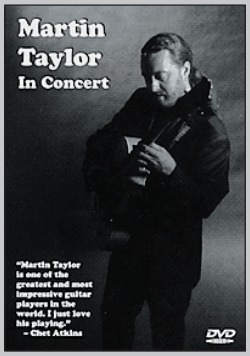

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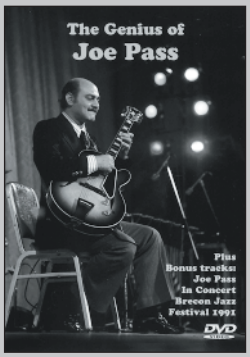

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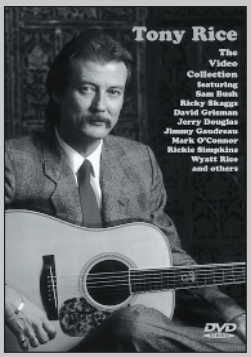

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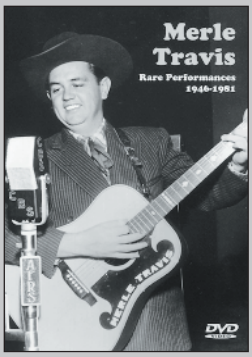

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Jimmy Martin

The King of Bluegrass Rhythm Guitar

"Somewhere along the way, moonshine and dynamite collided. The result is a three-chord scholar and musical genius named Jimmy Martin. He's part preacher, part prophet, and a card carrying madman who is completely filled with the musical holy ghost. Time spent with the King of Bluegrass is not for the lily livered or faint of heart."

—Marty Stuart

If you've been around bluegrass music for any length of time you have no doubt heard "Jimmy Martin stories." Notably, fiction writer and music critic Tom Piazza related a few of his experiences with Martin in an article written for the *Oxford American* back in 1997, which later became Piazza's book *True Adventures with the King of Bluegrass*. A sentence from a synopsis of Piazza's book reads, "Although aware that Martin had 'a reputation as a heavy drinker and a volatile personality,' Piazza found himself pitched headlong into a world he couldn't have anticipated."

I had heard the stories and I had read the *Oxford American* article, so when I set off to visit Jimmy Martin in his home in Hermitage, TN, in May of this year I felt like I was ready for just about anything that I might get from him. However, after spending four hours with the man at his home I'll have to admit that I really hadn't been prepared for what I got. What I experienced was a sober, humble, sincere man who has a love for traditional country and bluegrass music that is unequalled by anyone else that I have ever encountered. Talk of Monroe's original bluegrass band (with Flatt & Scruggs, Chubby Wise, and Cedric Rainwater) brought tears to his eyes. He spoke of Hank Williams, Sr. with an excitement and enthusiasm that lit up the room. When demonstrating the way he sings a "lonesome song" Jimmy actually teared up when singing the line. His music is real. He lives it. His heart and soul are part of every note, every vocal expression. You feel his music because he is feeling it right there with you. It is full of excitement, power, and emotion. It was an awesome experience to sit five feet from Jimmy Martin when he was playing his guitar and singing. It is something I will never forget.

Written by Dan Miller

I was a little baffled by the difference between the Jimmy Martin I experienced and the one I knew by reputation. I dug a little and found an interview with Piazza where he stated, "I think Jimmy is out front, in his actions and his personality, with a lot of things–both good and bad–that other people keep hidden. It's the same quality of directness and immediacy that you hear in his singing. Beyond that, though, he is a mix of so many opposites—toughness and vulnerability, self-involvement and generosity, silliness and deep seriousness–all of which you can also hear in his music–he is always interesting. Plus just the sound of his voice is great–whether he is singing or talking." I would say that this statement is congruent with my experience of Jimmy Martin during my visit.

Jimmy Martin tells it exactly the way he sees it and it is full-throttle and full speed ahead all the time. If he is singing a sad song, he is going to sing it as sad as it can be and you'll feel that sadness with him. If he is singing a happy song, he is going to put a lift and drive in it that will carry everyone in the audience along. Marty Stuart said that whenever Jimmy Martin hit the stage it was like cannons going off—he could never tone it down. Marty adds, "Thank God for that!" Jeff Hanna, of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, said, "Jimmy's temperature's higher than the rest of ours. He's a wild man in the best sense of the term and he's the only one who brought the fire of rockabilly music to bluegrass."

Jimmy Martin first learned how to play rhythm on a Prince Albert can which had rubber bands strung around it. Jimmy said, "I took the empty can up around where you opened it and I mashed it in, flat-like, and let the lid stay up. It wouldn't hit the can, you see. I'd get me six or eight rubber bands and I'd tighten them real tight. And all I'd do is strum across that and it would make a sound. I'd make a noise on that rubber band, you see." Although Jimmy said, "I was only 5 or 6 years old and kindly bashful," he would often get his Prince Albert can out and strum the rubber bands while singing to entertain visitors in his mother's home (Jimmy's father passed away when he was four).

Jimmy later got his first real guitar after working all summer for a dollar a day plowing corn. He was able to save seven dollars out of his summer wages, enough to buy a Gene Autry guitar. Although he loved to sing, Jimmy said, "I got me a job but I got fired for singing on the job. Everyone said 'If you could sing it would be alright.' But I couldn't sing and they didn't want to hear me so they fired me. Then I took the last check that I got, come all the way to Nashville and tried out for Bill Monroe and he hired me on the spot."

Born in 1927, Jimmy Martin joined Monroe's band in 1949 when he was just 22 years old. He said, "When I got fired from the job I said, 'I think I'll just go down and try out for Bill Monroe. I had learnt to sing lead, tenor, bass, and baritone from singing around the house on the days it would rain and we was off work. People would come around and we'd get the songbook and the old tuning fork out and we'd sing." After getting the job with Monroe, Jimmy went back to the man who had fired him for singing and thanked him. He recalls, "I told him he could listen in on Saturday night and hear me on the Grand Ole Opry with Bill Monroe."

Jimmy's trip to Nashville marked the first time he had ever been in a large town. When he got off the bus he asked somebody were he could find a hotel that was within walking distance of the Grand Ole Opry so he wouldn't get lost. He went to the Opry that night, sat in the balcony for the show and then found out where Bill Monroe would exit the Ryman. Jimmy recalls, "When he got through singing I run down to the back of the alley and stood at the steps until Bill come down. I hollered at him and he talked to me. I told him what I done playing up there at a radio station in Morristown, Tennessee. I told him, 'In your quartet I can sing some like Lester Flatt and play the guitar, I can sing bass, baritone, or tenor…any part.' I told him that I would like to sing one with him and he went right back in and invited me to sing one."

Once in the backstage area of the Opry Bill told Mac Wiseman to give Jimmy his guitar (the same guitar that Flatt had used when he was with Monroe). Bill picked up his mandolin and asked Rudy Lyle to grab his banjo and Chubby Wise to grab his fiddle and Bill's whole band joined Jimmy and Bill. Bill asked Jimmy what he would like to sing and Jimmy said, "A couple of weeks ago I heard one called 'The Old Crossroad.' Bill said, "I haven't sung that since Lester left. Let's give it a try." Jimmy remembers, "He cut loose on it and naturally I followed him on the guitar and put every run in it that he needed to be put in it and I sung it with him. Roy Acuff stuck his head in the door and said, 'Bill, who is that boy there with you? Is he any kin to you?' Bill said, 'No Roy, why?' Roy said, 'He sounds like he is kin to you. Your voice and his really goes together.' So I sung 'Poor Ellen Smith' by myself and Bill told me he liked the way I sung that."

"After that he said, 'How are you at following fiddle tunes? We feature Chubby on the show on 'Orange Blossom Special.' I said, 'I believe I could follow it.' When we got through, Bill asked Chubby what he thought of the guitar player. Chubby said, 'I thought Lester Flatt had it, but that boy has flat got it!' My britchy legs was a-shakin. Bill had to go over there, but told me to wait on him because he wanted to talk to me. When he come back he said, 'How would you like to go out with us this week? We are going out for five days.' I told him that I only had one pair of pants and no change of clothes. Bill said he would take care of that. We left Sunday night and played Ft. Smith,

Jimmy Martin with Bill Monroe on the Grand Ole Opry, 1953

Arkansas, on Monday." Jimmy stayed with Monroe for the next five years until he left to team up with Bobby and Sonny Osborne in 1954 and formed Jimmy Martin and the Osborne Brothers. By that time Martin had recorded 46 songs and instrumentals with Monroe on Decca Records.

Jimmy said that when he first joined Monroe he asked if Bill wanted him to try and play the guitar and sing like Lester. Bill said, "No I like what you are doing, you keep doing that." Jimmy recalls, "He said that he liked my timing and my voice and my lonesome sound. He didn't know it but I was putting a little bit of Hank Williams in my bluegrass voice. When I did that, Bill said, 'Can you do more of that in your voice?' If I had told him that I was doing a little bit of Hank in that he would have said, 'No, don't copy nobody.' But anyway, that is what I did and they called it the 'high lonesome sound.' I don't want to take any credit from Bill but Bill Monroe, everybody says, changed his style when I went with him. So if he changed his style, who would he be changing with? He went from singing anything him and Lester Flatt sung in G and me and him went to sing it in A. He done that with Jimmy Martin. In the mid-40s Bill recorded 'Blue Moon of Kentucky' in A. Jimmy Martin got with him in 1949 and he started singing 'Blue Moon of Kentucky' in B. You see what I'm saying? I told Bill, 'I can't hardly sing 'Blue Moon of Kentucky' in A, could we put it up in B?' And boy he liked that real quick. He said, 'Oh Lord, that is where to put it!' That suited Monroe to a 'T.' "

Jimmy's rhythm style was also different from that of Lester Flatt. Bill Emerson explains, "Jimmy was a whole different style of guitar player than Lester Flatt who was a thumb pick finger pick type of a player. Jimmy was a flatpick player. Jimmy Martin had a drive and a tone on his guitar that no other guitar player has got…absolutely can push you and make you go where he wants you to go with his guitar." Jimmy Martin refers to his style of playing rhythm guitar as "rumble rhythm." It consists of very full down stroke and upstroke strums, interspersed with bass notes and runs, and provides a sound that helps "put the gravel in every chug hole." His masterful placement of runs and the dynamics he uses to appropriately provide power and drive when needed have earned him the respect of all great bluegrass guitar players.

When asked about how he developed his style of rhythm guitar Jimmy said, "Nobody every showed me nothing except Rubin Gibson showed me C, D, G, A, and E chords. The rest was just how I felt about it. If you were pickin' a banjer and me a-pickin' with ya, I would try to complement what you did and put in what runs that would complement what we was doing together. I just didn't do what I do and let you do what you do. I always tried to take my guitar and back the next man up. If he was playing the fiddle I'd try to keep good rhythm and keep timing. When the mandolin took a break I would put in runs that would fit how he was takin' his break. The better he plays, the better I can back him up. If he had poor timing it will confuse me and I can't do it. When a man comes up to the microphone I always try to back him up because I'm listening. He is the one to back up because he is the one that is taking the lead. You've got to foller him and do what he is doing. But if he breaks timing, I have to break timing too. The band has got to stick together. If you are going out with a painting crew and you are a real good painter and you take a sloppy crew you are going to have a bad sloppy paint job. If you have a good crew, everybody is going to make it look good. That is the way it is with music. That is the best way I can explain it."

Throughout the interview, Jimmy continually expressed the importance of musician's playing together and pointed to Monroe's first bluegrass band as the best example of this musical cohesion. He said, "That was one of the best bands that ever was in bluegrass music. I'd listen to them on Saturday night on the Grand Ole Opry and I'd stand there and nearly cry. There is nothing today to my ear that can touch what Bill Monroe, Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, Chubby Wise, and Cedric Rainwater did back in 1946 and 47. They flat had their instruments together, they flat had the timing and the singing and all was together."

Jimmy explains, "Everything has to sound like an orchestra, it has to be together every time. Earl Scruggs, Bill, and Cedric Rainwater was the timing of that group. There has never been a man who put a banjer around his neck that has had the timing of Earl Scruggs. You take bass timing and bass playing, to my ear, there has never been a bass player that ever could even compare to Cedric Rainwater. He's the best you have ever seen. Lester put in the runs, like Bill said, he knew how to do the runs with Earl at the end of every line. It made the group completely perfect. At the end of every line, somebody was doin' something. Something was fittin' in there and it wasn't dead. As Buddy Spicher used to say, 'At the end of every line put a few gravels in every chug hole that comes along,' which is good, you know."

Speaking of his own bands, Jimmy said, "I've had two bands that I could record with. One was with J.D. Crowe and Paul Williams. We'd always come to Nashville and pick up a fiddle player and a bass player, and maybe snare drums. The other band was with Paul Williams, Bill Emerson, Kirk Hanser, and Louise Johnson. Those were the best bands that I've ever had. I've had nothing to compare that. I've only had three albums with them and it's the best sound and the best music I've ever had. I've not had it since. It's been thirty years." When asked about what these individuals had that served to create this sound Jimmy said, "They worked at it, they were good listeners and they tried. Today you don't find those kind

of musicians."

Jimmy added, "I wouldn't want to leave this out. Bob Osborne and Sonny come with me back when Sonny was fourteen years old and we got our harmonies down. Sonny is one of the best baritone singers that there ever was and Bob can cut the tenor anywhere I wanted to put it. We got our singing together and got our three instruments together and when we recorded for RCA Victor me and Bob and Sonny and banjer, mandolin, and guitar was all on one mic. You couldn't turn up one of us without turning up the other. We had it all together. We knew just exactly how to put the runs in, how loud to make them, and how to hit it together. To have a perfect band, everybody has to do that. The bass can't play three notches louder, the mandolin player can't hit rhythm louder. It has to all be the same level. Me and Bob and Sonny all worked the timing together. Bob got the rhythm that I was a-gettin on my guitar, Sonny got the rhythm that I was a-gettin on my guitar and it was so easy to foller."

When asked if the timing and togetherness of the band with he and the Osborne brothers naturally just came together, he replied, "No, that happened because every Tuesday we'd rehearse until we got it down like we wanted it. Then we played shows every Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. We did the same thing on every show and did it the same way every time. My runs came in at the same time and when Sonny come in, I'd come in pushing him. It don't stay the same. When you're singin' you kinda let it float along, you see. Then when your banjer comes in and lifts it up, you throw a lot of power on it. You know what I'm saying? You don't stand there and play soft, you come in with a bang and everybody turns her loose and everybody at the same loudness."

Rehearsal was also a big component to the success of the Jimmy Martin, J.D. Crowe, and Paul Williams group. Jimmy explained the he was living in Florida when the group came together and he rented rooms to J.D. and Paul. The trio would rehearse 2 to 3 hours everyday "until we got her down just like we wanted it." Jimmy said, "I rehearsed the Osborne brothers and J.D. Crowe and Paul Williams more than I ever rehearsed anyone in my life."

Jimmy believes that if a man is playing in a group, he should concentrate on the music of that group and not jam with others outside of that group. He said, "Today they don't play the songs of the group that they are in when they practice. If they jam, they just go off and play every way. Jamming does not rehearse a professional guy in his music. When Hank Williams came back stage and the members of his band were what you call jamming, he'd put his guitar up around his neck and say, 'Boys, let's play the music that puts our biscuits on the table.' Which meant his music."

Jimmy continued, "Say I've got a banjer player who is real good, you ain't going to get him off in a jam with somebody else. Because he ain't going to get over there and just half play. These that plays today just get over there and tear her loose and just jams and picks anyway to take a break. They just fire into it. But to have a professional band you have to do what the band is doin'. The jamming don't help him, it makes him worse. Because if you are playing everything and you play for three or four hours at the jam and not playing Jimmy Martin style one time, then you come back the next day, get on stage and tune up and fire out and try to play that timing, it ain't going to be there. If you are playing with Earnest Tubb and you are going to play that guitar the way Earnest Tubb plays it, but when you are off stage you play everybody else's music, when you get back with Earnest you'll forget how to play 'Walking the Floor Over You' because you've got every music in your mind."

Bill Emerson remembers: "When you worked for Jimmy he wanted you to play his music the way he wanted it played. Even if you were out at a job where there was other bluegrass musicians around, suppose Mac Wiseman and his band, or somebody…the Osborne Brothers were there, he didn't want you messing around with those guys. He'd say, 'You know what you ought to be doing rather than doing that? You ought to be back in the dressing room there practicing my stuff. Because if you think you've got it right, you don't.' "

Although Jimmy Martin experienced great success on the country music charts during the late fifties and 1960s, his talent was brought to a much wider audience by way of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band's multi-million selling *Will The Circle Be Unbroken* album. When asked about that experience, Jimmy said, "That was one of the greatest feeling I have ever had in my life and the greatest enjoyable album that I every cut…you see I recorded on all three of them, but the first one when I was in the studio standing beside Roy Acuff, Mother Maybelle Carter, Earl Scruggs, Doc Watson, and Merle Travis, don't you know that made my heart feel good. God, I enjoyed that more than anything in the world. Standing in there was some of the best times that I ever had in the music business and I thought by far the best sounding album is the first one. I remember what I said to Roy Acuff when we was recording "Will the Circle Be Unbroken." I said, 'Roy, I'm going to get to stand beside you and I've always liked your singing. I'm going to sing my verse just as close to you as I can get it.' He put his arm around me and said, 'No, you just sing it like Jimmy Martin, it will be all right.' It was one of the best recording sessions that I've ever been on because every one was so happy and so enjoyable doing it. We all had so much fun. It didn't feel like a recording session. Some of the songs were recorded and we didn't even know they were recording it. If you could have seen it, everyone had a smile on his face."

Jimmy Martin with his gold albums for the *Will the Circle Be Unbroken* Volumes 1 & 2. Other album covers and awards are in the background.

In addition to his success and popularity as a singer and guitar player, Jimmy Martin is the consummate entertainer. Bill Emerson remembers, "Jimmy always wanted to have a show rather than four dead guys up there like posts. The old style bluegrass thing was four guys standing up there looking at each other and playing. That is not where it is at with Jimmy." Paul Williams adds, "He can have an audience in the palm of his hand after the first verse and chorus of a song…quicker than anyone that I have ever seen in my life. And they will hang right them with him. He just has that knack." Jimmy's long time manager, Lance LeRoy, says, "Jimmy is the kind of entertainer that made the Opry. He doesn't just drape himself around a microphone. There is something going all of the time. Jimmy was always different from the heard. He has always been a rebel. He has been a renegade all his life."

When asked about what he thinks is the main component of the music that today's players are missing, Jimmy said, "Putting their heart and soul in it. I'll tell you this, if a man works hard enough and gives his heart and puts it in it, then he'll make it. Nobody is going to give you nothing. But if you work at it and you love it and you work at it hard enough, then you will make it. You can't make it looking for a place to sleep."

Earlier this year a new film documenting Jimmy Martin's life, *King Of Bluegrass—The Life and Times of Jimmy Martin*, was released and premiered in Nashville on April 28th. A who's who of bluegrass musicians were on hand for the premier in order to pay tribute to Martin. The film, by Chicago filmmaker George Goehl, traces Jimmy Martin's rise from the hills of Sneedville, Tennessee through his apprenticeship with Monroe and his decades as a bandleader. The documentary presents footage of Martin on stage throughout his career along with insightful segments of Martin in his daily life today—opening mail at home, hunting with friends, riding on the bus to a festival, visiting his old home place. It is all interesting because it is all Jimmy Martin. As Goehl says, "He's Jimmy Martin, morning, noon and night. You can take it or leave it." You can learn more about the film at www.kingofbluegrass.com or email staightsixfilms@hotmail.com.

After interviewing Jimmy, he told me he wanted me to add two things to the article I wrote. The first was to mention that he has been named the ambassador of the Bill Monroe Bluegrass Music Festival in Bean Blossom, Indiana. The second was to mention the names of his hunting dogs. His beagles are George Jones, Mel Tillis, Little Jimmie Dickens, and Rhonda Vincent. His squirrel dogs are Loretta Lynn and Marty Stuart. His coon dogs are Dolly Parton, Patty Loveless, and Tom T Hall. Jimmy's long-time live-in girlfriend and fan club president, Mary Ann Garrison, asked that we "be sure to mention that he names his beloved dogs after his friends in country music." A bumper sticker on the back of the truck Jimmy takes hunting reads "When the tailgate drops, the bullshit stops." That is pure Jimmy Martin.

President Garfield's Hornpipe

by Craig Vance

Here's a bouncy hornpipe that should actually get more recognition in and among jam sessions and parking lot picking than it does at the present. It's in the key of A, but you can bump it up to Bb or B by using the capo of your choice.

I remembered this tune from Norman's *Lighthouse By The Shore* LP. Then I heard a rendition of it by Tony Furtado that a friend of mine had in his car on the way to a gig. Having only heard the two renditions and one goofy midi version on the internet, I followed Blake's version. His rendition was in Bb, I believe, and I backed it down a notch to get the deeper tones in the rhythm, which is played in open A.

Right off the bat after the first two lead in notes, you will crosspick the G, D, and A strings. The G and D are open, and the A is fretted with the second finger on the 2nd fret. If you are new to crosspicking, I suggest simply going over that first measure and a half several times slowly to get comfortable with the rolling pick motion. The G note is struck with a downstroke, the D with an upstroke, the A with a downstroke. That keeps the roll steady and flowing.

After the first two notes of the B section of the tune, you will want to form a C chord for the crosspicking backward to forward roll. Then over the G chord, form the F position up on the third fret for that same type of crosspicked roll. Over the D7 chord, form the first and second fingers of the D7, and stretch the pinkie on over to the F# on the 4th string for that roll. There you are using economy of motion, and once you get the tune in your head, the chords will come natural to you. This will allow you to concentrate on the crosspicking.

This doesn't need to be played at breakdown speed by any means. With the rolls, crosspicking and occasional chromatic runs, it ís nice **not** to take it too quickly.

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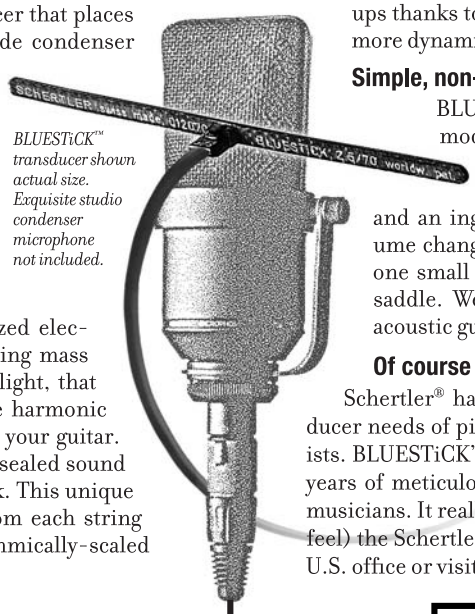

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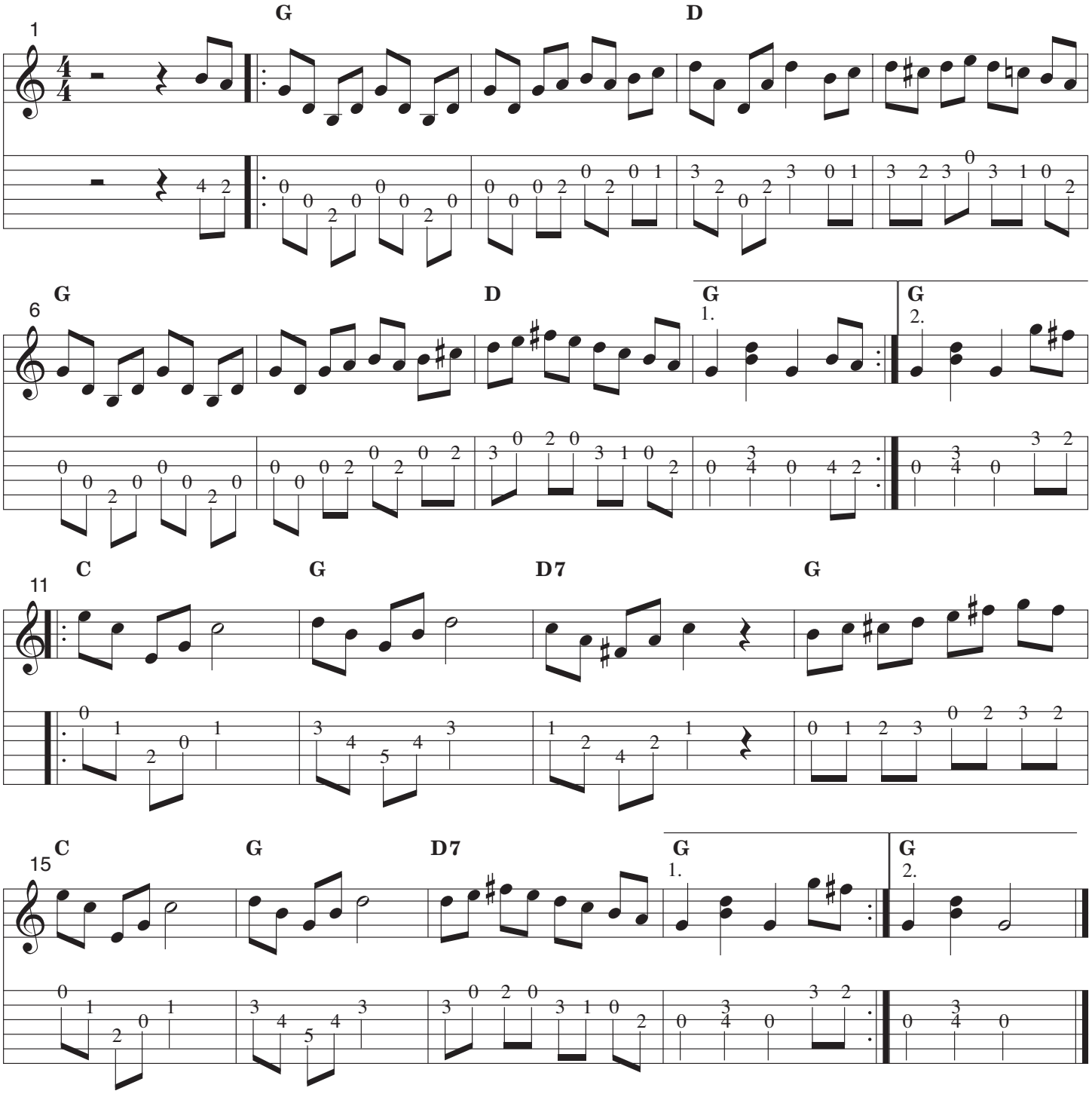
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Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

Modulation—Changing Keys Within a Song

You might think that "modulation" is a pretty big word to put into a beginning guitar column, but how you gonna graduate to your next belt rank if you don't know what any of this stuff means? Simply explained, modulation is arranging a song to include a key change. You might start the song in G, but change to A after the first verse. If you feel like the word "modulation" is a little pretentious for bluegrass, you can just call it "key change" or (as in the old joke) substitute "homogenize."

But why do we modulate? There are as many reasons as there are banjo players. I'd suggest that the most "legitimate" reason is to introduce drama into the arrangement. OK, but why would we want to introduce drama? Well, the plot might be starting to thicken in the second verse (for example). It could be the verse where Johnny gets "Pretty Polly" down to the banks of the Ohio to see how long she can hold her breath underwater.

There's a musical tension that we feel when the key suddenly jumps up a whole step from G to A, when "Little Sadie" is being stabbed or when Mary mysteriously evaporates in the back seat of the car.

But there can be practical reasons to "homogenize." What if the guitar player knows a break in G and the fiddle player knows a break in A? One well-known example is "Hot Burrito Breakdown." This 30-year-old Country Gazette tune changes from G to A and then back to G again. Why? Because the banjo and mandolin players had good solos worked up in G while the fiddle played it in A. The sound of the "key change" wakes up the listener and keeps the arrangement alive.

But how do we modulate? Glad you asked. This is where the creativity comes in. You can change from one key to another simply by starting the next round in another key, or you can create a mini chord-progression that becomes a transition from the original key to the new key. In "Hot Burrito Breakdown," the transition from G to A was done by chromatically walking from G to A (in other words, G, G#, A). After the fiddle solo (in A) they simply reversed that idea by playing A, Ab, G. If the key change goes from G to C (perfect 4th), you could play G, G7, C. Playing a G7 is a common transition when going from G to C, so why not use it when you're modulating?

How about "Legend of the Rebel Soldier"? This Country Gentlemen classic uses a different key for each of the three verses. The sound of the musical pitch rising before each new verse enhances the drama of the story. As a matter of fact, it's Charlie Waller's rhythm guitar that enhances the beauty of this arrangement and Charlie's rhythm guitar bass runs that tie the verses together. Let's learn these two rhythm guitar bass runs from "Legend of the Rebel Soldier." The first verse is in G. The bass run that takes the song from G to A is the following series of 8th notes starting on the 6th string: G (3rd fret), Gb (2rd fret), G (3rd fret), G# (4th fret), A (5th string open A). The second transition is from the second verse (key of A), to the third and final verse in the key of C. The quarter note bass run starts on the open A-string, then B and C. It's simple and effective.

Another famous modulation that comes to mind is the Bob Wills classic "San Antonio Rose" on the recording *Bob Wills for the Last Time*. The twin fiddles played it in A (because that was the best key for the open strings of the fiddle), but the best key for the singer's voice was Eb. This created the musical problem: how do you transition from A to Eb? I won't tell you how they did it because I want you to figure that out yourself, but I will give you one hint (a chord progression of 4 chords). The result was a very appealing sound and everybody was happy.

So the next time your banjo player wants it in G, your singer wants it in A, and you (the guitar player) want it in C, don't altercate! Modulate!

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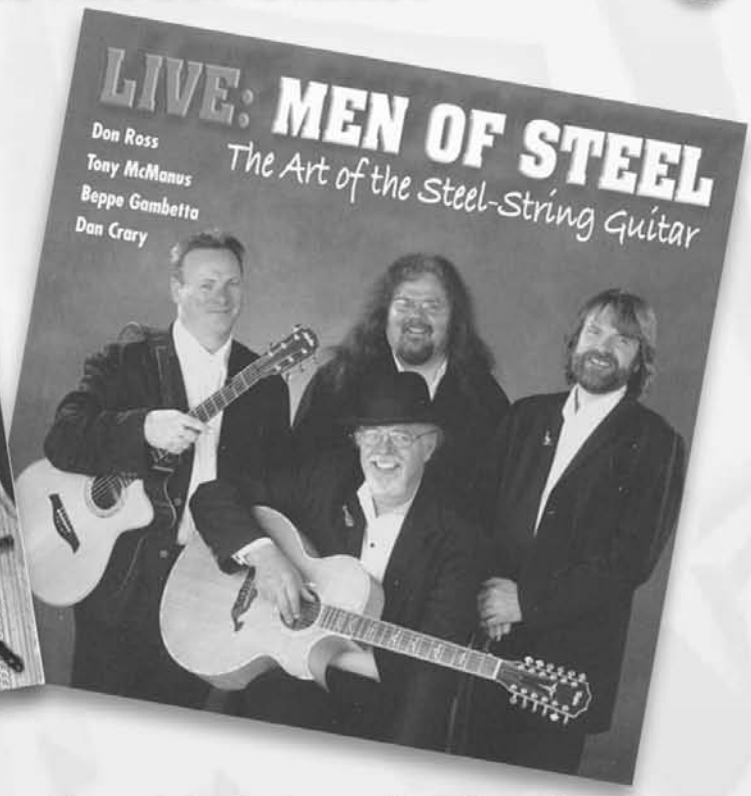

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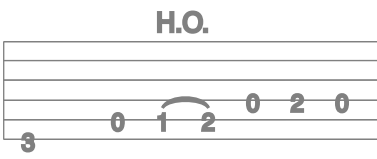

by Joe Carr

Audio CD Track 7

Playing Rhythm on Flatpicking Standards: Gold Rush

"Gold Rush" is a bluegrass standard that appears as #8 on the Top Ten of flatpicking. Bill Monroe's recording featured fancy fiddling and a driving but simple progression. This tune and many other instrumentals have a "hook" in the B part. Often, we can't even recognize a tune until the B part is played. "Shuckin the Corn," "Dixie Breakdown," and "Bugle Call Rag" are good examples. (Notice these are all banjo tunes.)

The tune is played in A because that's where fiddlers play it, but guitar and banjo players often play it in open G when no mandolin players or fiddlers are around. The basic shade-tree guitar chords are as follows (with capos at the second fret). Each letter gets four beats. Chords in parentheses get two beats each:

#1A
G G G G
G G D G
#1B
G (CG) G G
G (CG) D G

A variation of this version replaces the full measure of D with this split measure: (GD).

Someone must have become bored playing all those G chords in the A part and invented this variation which can be heard around some festivals.

#2A
G G G E
G G (GD) G

Another creative picker realized the 6m (Em) chord could be used:

#3A
G G G Em
G G (GD) G

#3B
G (CG) G Em
G (CG) (GD) G

Against my better judgment, I'm going to give you another set of possible chords. I am reluctant to do this because they might catch on and I'm really a fan of the original (#1), but here goes:

#4A
G Em Bm D
Em G (Am D) G

#4B
(Em G) (C Bm) (G Em) (Bm D)
(Em G) (C Bm) (Am D) G

I'm sure this will be considered subversive material by many of your picking friends. Conspire with a bass player and mandolin picker to spring this on an unsuspecting banjo player the last time through the tune. I promise you will get some kind of reaction!

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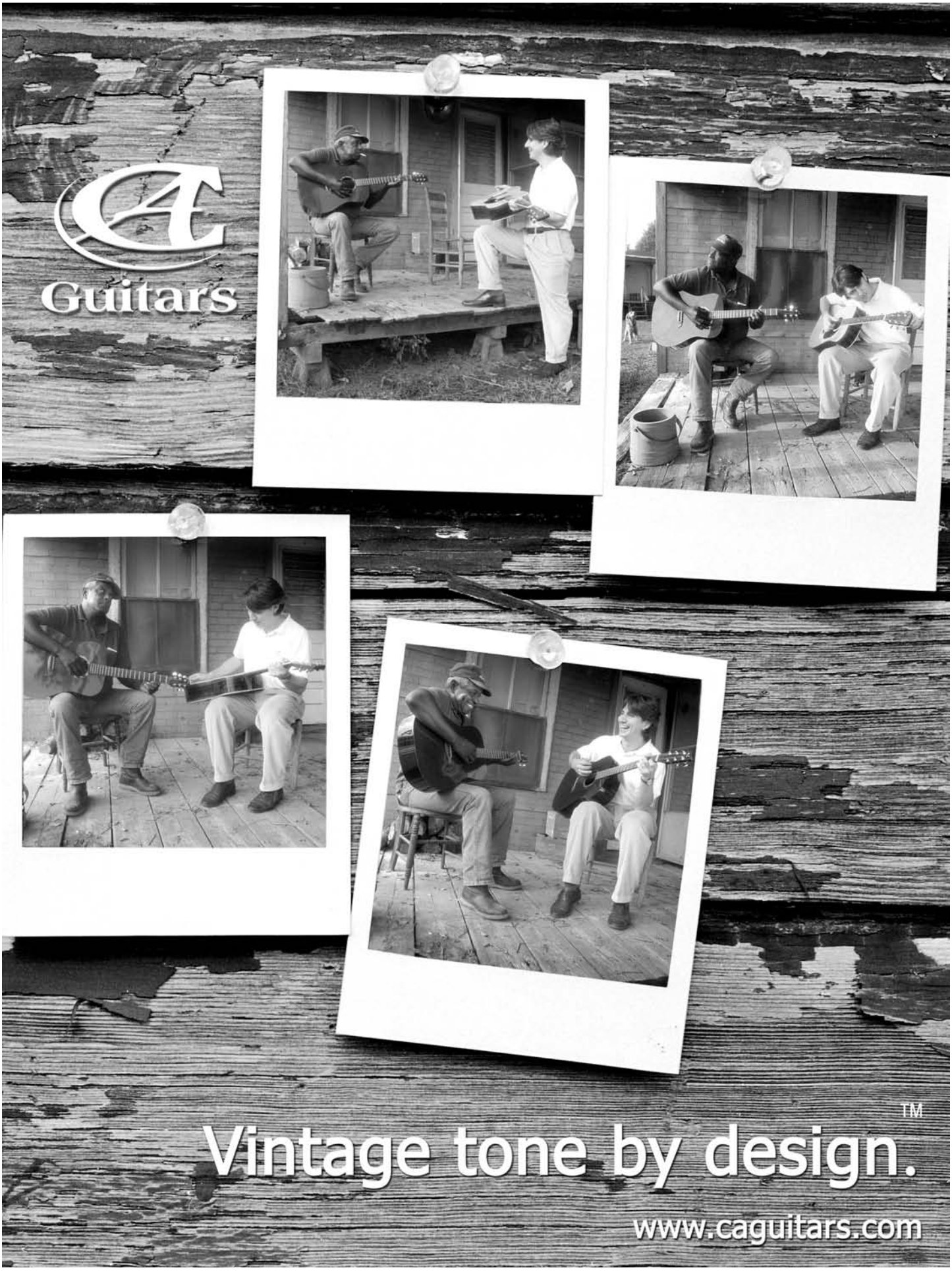
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Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

Harmonized Scales

What do the signature guitar parts for such standards as "Brown Eyed Girl," "Blackbird," and a myriad of others have in common? They use a concept that I call the harmonized scale. The savvy guitarist (and I would hope that we all aspire to be so described) should have memorized all the positions of the different configurations of the various major scale positions, because scales are the basic building blocks upon which all else rests. But, how about harmonized scales? This is where you provide your own harmony note on another string to any given scale. Harmonized scales are handy for several reasons:

- They help minimize the tendency of acoustic guitars to sound "thin" in the upper registers by rubbing two frequencies against each other.
- They foster the use of interesting rhythmic variations in picking patterns.
- They help immensely in navigating around the fret board when improvising.

This would be a good time to review the formula for finding a major scale anywhere on the guitar. A whole step between notes (for instance, C to D) is called a "tone." A half step (C to C#) is called a "semitone." Start on any note and play "tone, tone, semitone, tone, tone, tone, semitone." Presto! You've got a major scale.

Let's start with a harmonized scale in E major (see Example A) .

Start with the E one octave above the open high E on the 12th fret. The best harmony note to use would be the 3rd interval above the E tonic note. But that note won't work as it would cover the tonic. So we lower the harmony note (in this case a G sharp) an octave and use an inverted harmony. So, place your first finger on the 12th fret, E string and your second finger on the 13th fret, G string. Then slide your second finger down to the 11th fret and switch to the third finger for the 11th fret, E string. Notice that the positions, after the first one, are all conveniently grouped in pairs for easy memorization. Do this scale up and back until you have the positions down. Then you can experiment with hammer-ons and pull-offs using the E string and bring in the low E for a drone.

Example B shows a four string version of a harmonized E major scale. The high E and B strings ring throughout. Place the first finger on the 13th fret, G string, and your second finger on the 14th fret D string. If you let the tip of your second finger mute the A string from playing, you can strum across all the strings and get some interesting textures.

Examples C and D show harmonized scales one octave in both directions from the tonic, A, in this case.

Memorize the different positions for E, F, G, A, C & D both up and down the strings and across. Experiment with going nonlinear, or skipping over positions. The sky is the limit!

As to the song examples at the start of the column, "Brown Eyed Girl" uses the 1st three positions of the harmonized scale, up and back, in each of the three chords in the I-IV-V progression. "Blackbird" uses an inverted low harmony note on the first three positions of the G scale. I'm sure you can probably come up with a few more examples of old classics and standards that use variations of the harmonized scale. Until next time, may the melody be with you.

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Harmonized Scale Examples

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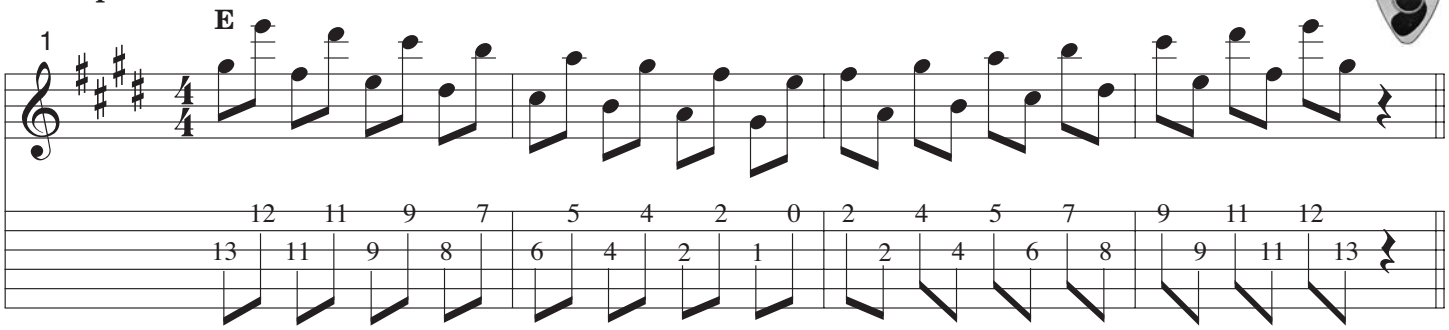
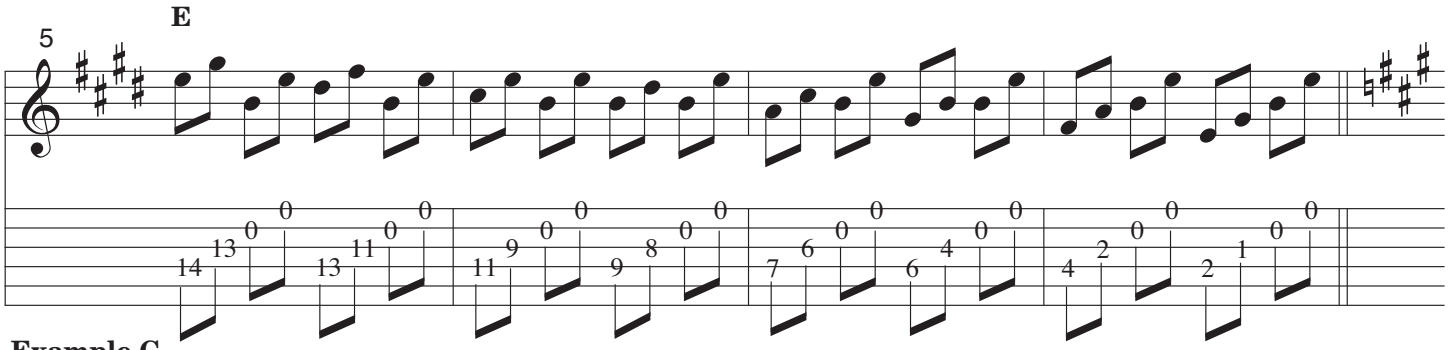
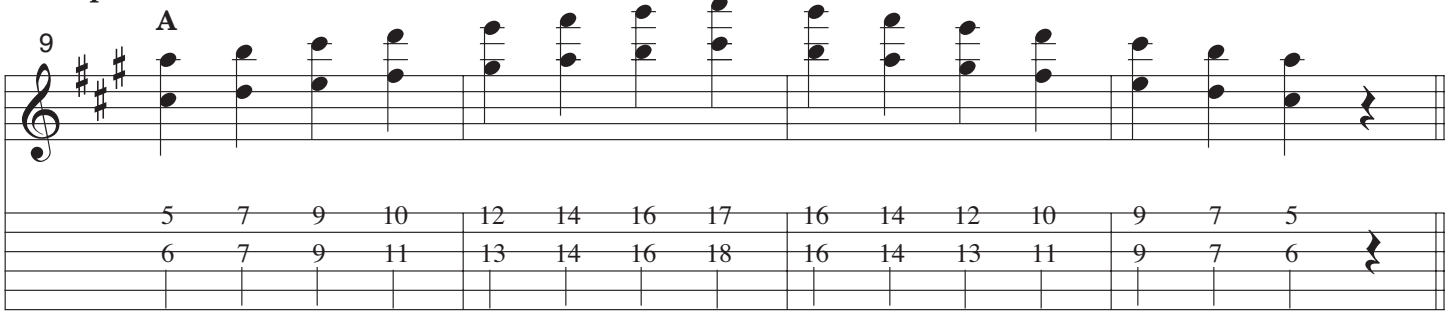
Example A



Example B



Example C



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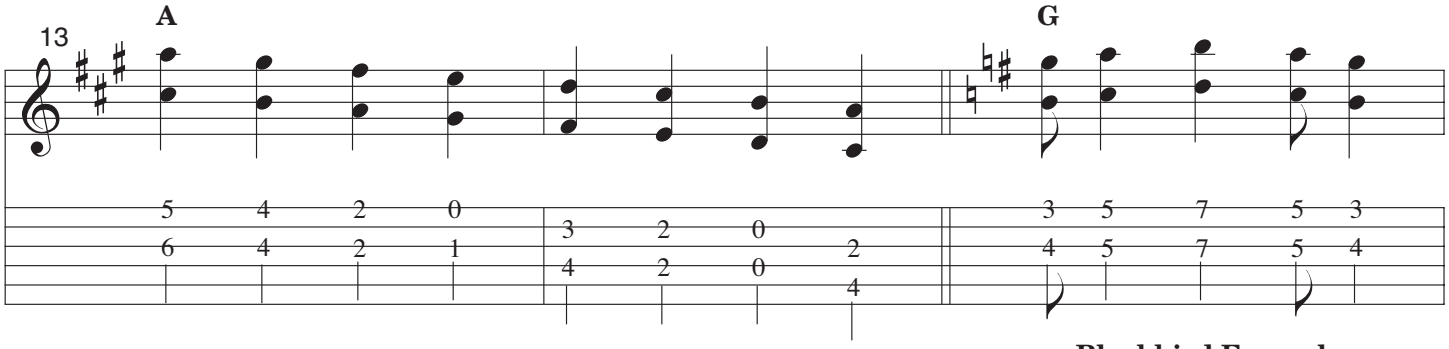
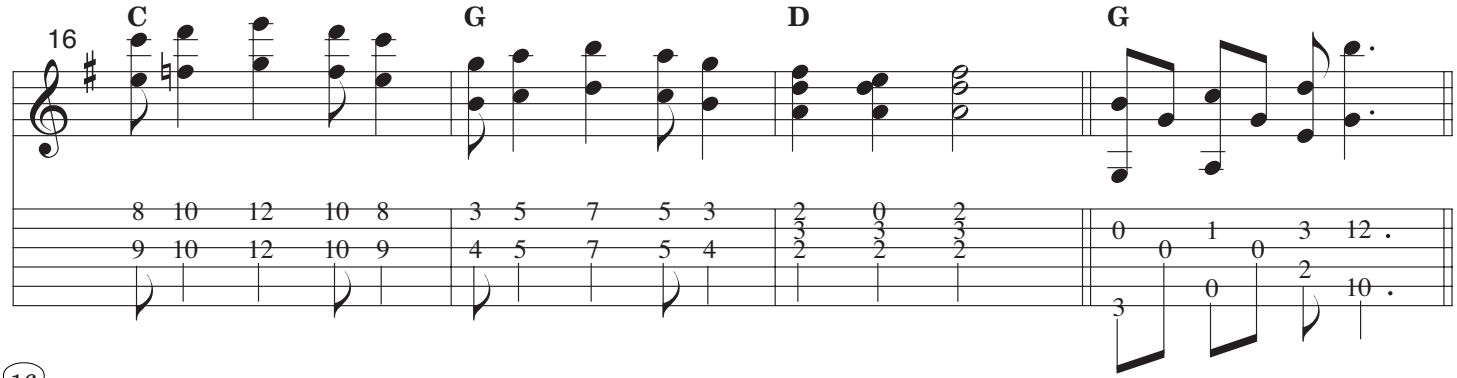


Brown Eyed Girl Example

Blackbird Example



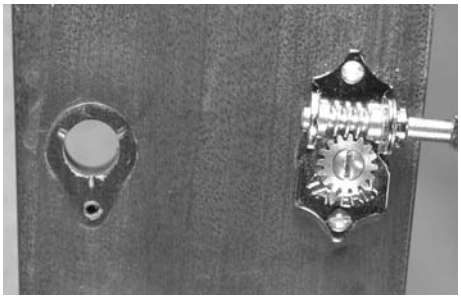
Guitar Maintenance and Repair

by Frank Ford

Back to the Future: Downsizing Tuners

In the 1960s, when playability was pretty much the only concern, many of us saved our pennies to add the new Grover Rotomatic tuners to our Martins that originally came with open gears. Now that "originality" rules, it's become quite popular to return to those early style gears, even when they were not original equipment.

Here's an example. The original tuner was a Grover Rotomatic, and the new Waverly reissue covers the scar in the back of the peghead quite neatly, so it would seem that this could be an easy conversion:



In this case, the Waverly reissue won't quite hide the scar left by a Kluson tuner, but it still looks pretty good:

This one had the original small tuner replaced by a Schaller with an unusual screw pattern in the back, so whatever tuner goes on here, there's sure to be a series of unsightly holes exposed:

But the back of the peghead is, after all, the back, so maybe we won't notice it too much. On this guitar, the replacement Grover or Schaller tuners had large washers that covered quite a bit of territory around the enlarged hole:

With time and exposure to UV, the surrounding wood lightened considerably, leaving very dark rings under the washers. No matter how the conversion is done on this guitar, there will be a telltale ring around each tuner post.

The subject of this article is a 1940 D-18 that originally came with very modest open back tuners. When its current owner bought the guitar it was more than 20 years old, and had already undergone a tuner transplant. This second set of tuners was also a modest open back style, and the new owner of the guitar opted to upgrade to a nice new set of gold Grover Rotomatics. In order to install the Grovers, the tuner holes were enlarged from 1/4" to 3/8" diameter. Fortunately, this guitar shows virtually no sign that those big washers were even on the front of the peghead. In fact, the peghead face was incredibly clean, scratch free and original.

Keeping an eye on the future, the owner of the guitar kept that second set of tuners "just in case." After enduring recent years of comments by pickin' buddies, he recently decided to return to the "period" tuners, even though they clearly wouldn't work as well. (Since this was really a second set of tuners, I figured I could get away with that "back to the future" thing.)

That, of course, is where I came in. My job was to reduce the size of the holes and reinstall the old gears. For enlarging or simply truing up holes, I have this wonderful machinist's reamer:

It looks plenty nasty, but in fact is about the most gentle way to true up a peghead hole. It's called a #7 taper pin reamer, and it has the very gently taper of 1/4" to the foot. Its spiral flutes are left handed, while the cutting edge is right handed, so when I run the reamer, it has no tendency to grab, tear, or dig in.

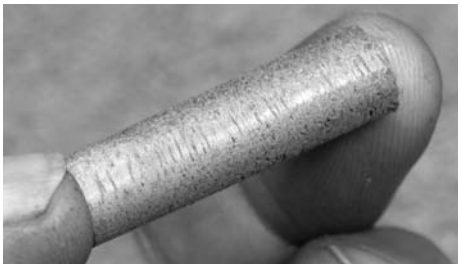
Chucked in my Makita, and running at a slow speed, the reamer gives me no trouble at all. I can take off a tiny amount, or push it right on through:

This time my job was just to make the holes round. When they were enlarged, the

inner surfaces were pretty chewed up, and I wanted to have nice smooth surfaces to glue in my new material. I ran the reamer until the front edge of the hole was just touched and made round. It wouldn't matter if the back edge of the hole were a bit bigger because the plate of the tuner would easily hide that area. But I wanted the front edge to be neat if it were to be visible after the job was completed.

Since my new hole would have a slight taper I needed to make some plugs that also had the same taper. It was a lathe and grinding job that's potentially worth a separate article, but suffice it to say I made a plug cutter that cuts precisely the same taper as the reamer. Chucked in the drill press, I ran the cutter deep into some mahogany to produce some nice plugs:

My plugs had the grain oriented sideways, so when they were in place, the wood fibers would line up with those of the peghead:



The plugs were all the same diameter and taper, but the holes varied according to how much reaming it took to make them smooth. That meant that each plug stuck into the peghead to a different depth:

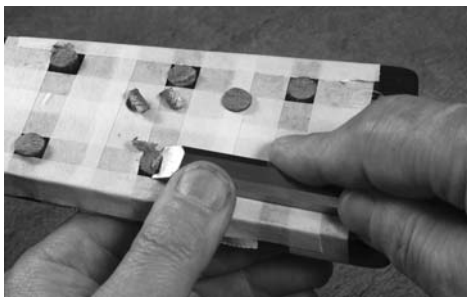
That's why I used a taper reamer and really long taper plugs, so I'd be sure to get a good fit for each.

I marked each one, removed it, and cut it roughly to length:

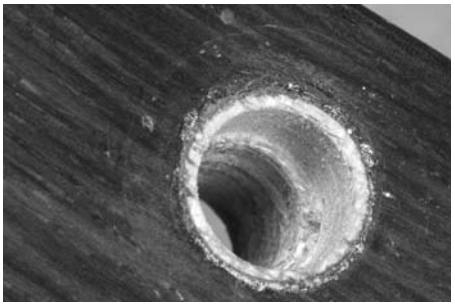
For some reason, I didn't get a good "before" shot, so you'll have to peer at the above photo to see the combined scars from all three tuner sets.

Because there's so much end grain on this kind of plug and in this kind of hole, I chose epoxy for its grain and gap filling properties. I knew I'd be drilling most of the plug away, and I wanted a good solid bond on the inside of the holes, particularly at the top edge where the bushings would be pressed in. A light tap drove each plug "home."

The next morning I covered the peghead with some masking tape, and sliced off the excess material with my sharpest 1/2" chisel:

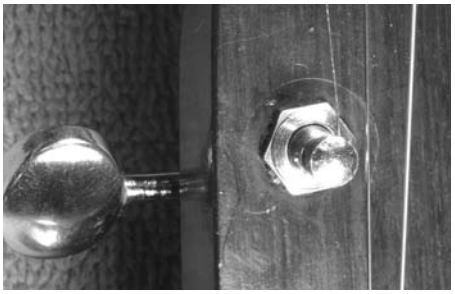


Mike gave me a hand at the drill press, holding the guitar while I used a brad point bit to drill the bushing hole from the top and the 1/4" tuner post hole from the back side through each plug. Here you can see the result, a nice stepped hole:



Even though the bushing would be likely to cover the entire cut portion of the top of the plug, I use a bit of dark brown stain to roughly match the rosewood peghead veneer:

Once the bushing was pressed in, and the tuner mounted, the guitar looked pretty much as it had the day it was purchased in the 1960s:



If you look really closely, you can see the tiny scars from the first tuners, but you shouldn't look at somebody's guitar that closely…

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Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Silent Night

Hi, friends and it's hard to believe I am sitting in the sweltering heat of August thinking about something to put into FGM for a late fall issue. It's the holiday time already. We may be a little early but I thought I would get you going now so you can be all practiced up for December. If this ends up being your fancy and you don't have enough holiday materials try my video *Flatpicking Through The Holidays* or my book *Smokey Mountain Christmas*. This arrangement is a little tricky because of the timing in several measures. Measure 1 will sound like one-two and da-da-da. Same with measure 3, 11, and 14.

Measure 2 has a really quick grace note hammer-on from the first to the second fret. Many measures have gobs of triplets. Be sure to make the first note of the three stonger than the two that follow.

Have fun with this classic and play along with the recording. See you all down the road somewhere!

Bye for now, Steve K.

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Silent Night

Arranged by Steve Kaufman

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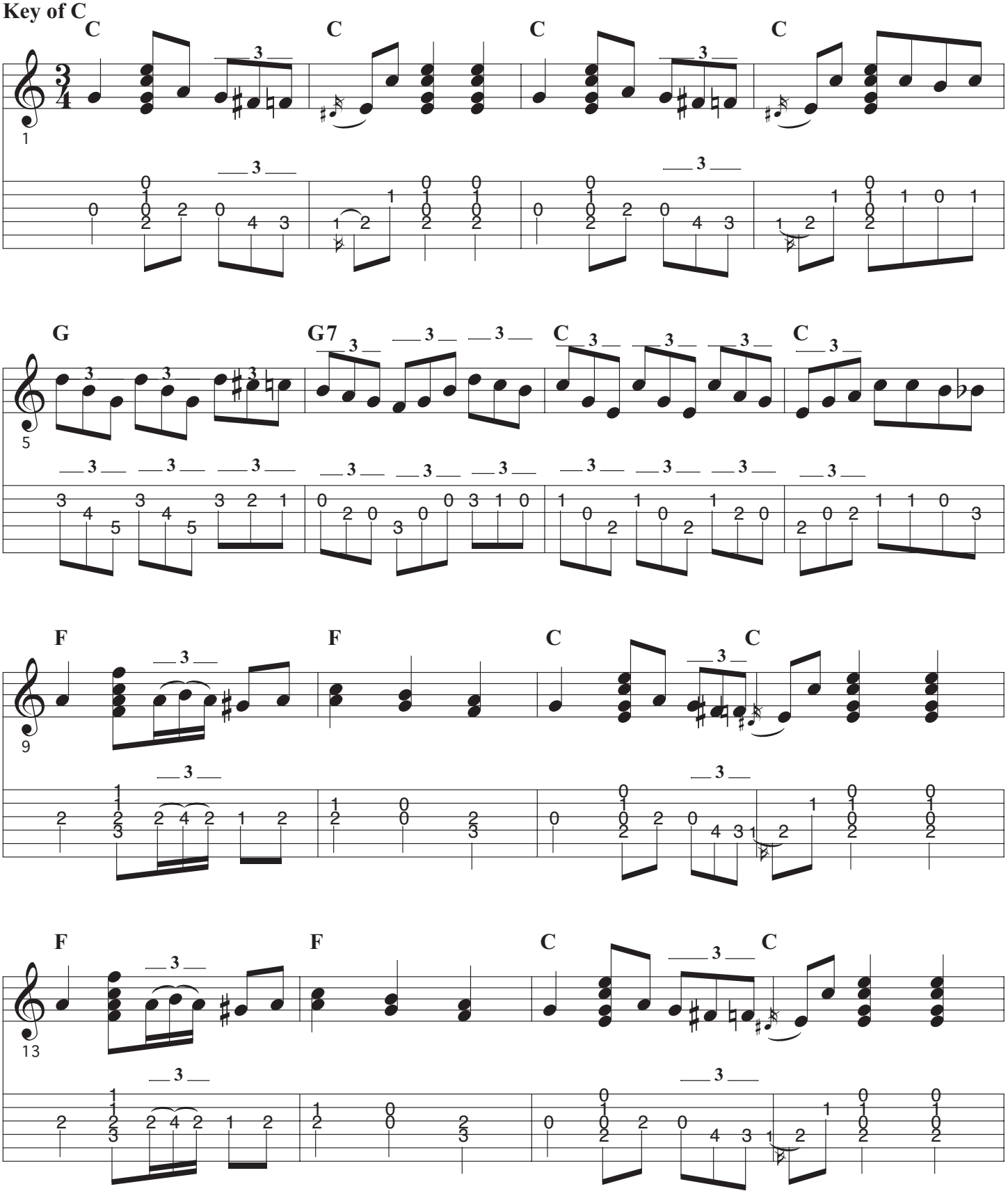
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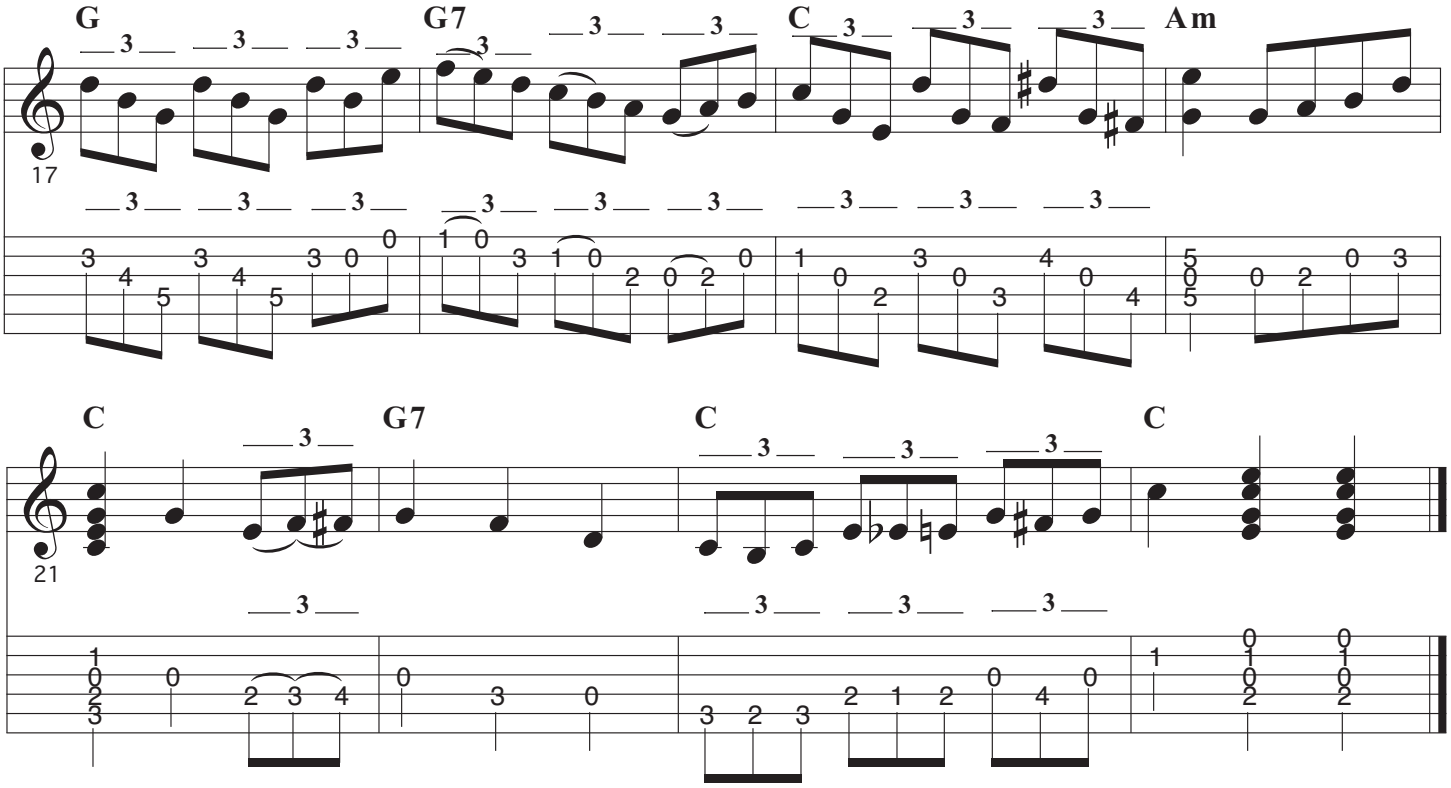
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Adventures in Acoustic Music: Ocean of Diamonds

by John Carlini

I think of Jimmy Martin as the "Thelonious Monk of Bluegrass"! Why? In a word; FORM.

Monk is known for unusual form both in his compositions and in his playing style. Jimmy Martin is a unique composer. Each of his tunes is woven around a specific form. You won't find the usual 4-bar, 8-bar, 16-bar "box" form in a Jimmy Martin tune. The unexpected is always around the corner, just as it is in life. I like that! For that reason his tunes provide excellent source material for "jazzed up" arrangements for solo guitar or larger ensembles.

I have been exploring some of those possibilities in his tune, "Ocean of Diamonds." The form of the tune "breaks the mold" right away! The entire piece is structured around a 7-bar phrase which repeats throughout. The phrase is divided into 3 bars + 4 bars. So right away we have something very interesting with which to experiment.

I have (obviously) taken a lot of liberty in this arrangement. I've added some bluesy-gospel type chords and some jazz harmonies. Though I've explored some of the "harmonic implications," the basic structure remains.

As a separate study, the chord "voicings" are very important in all aspects of swing and jazz playing.

The lead line includes some improv along with melodic phrasing. I recorded the linear material using the "blank slate" approach, then transcribed the result.

I suggest that you record the changes and practice playing along (don't forget to use your metronome!), and/or jam with a friend.

I hope you enjoy working with Jimmy Martin's "Ocean of Diamonds." See you next time!

Please visit John's web site (www.johncarlini.com) for the latest performance info and acoustic music news. Check out the new CD by the John Carlini Quartet, *The Game's Afoot!*, featuring Don Stiernberg, Brian Glassman, and Steve Holloway, with special guest, Pat Cloud at www.fgmrecords.com.

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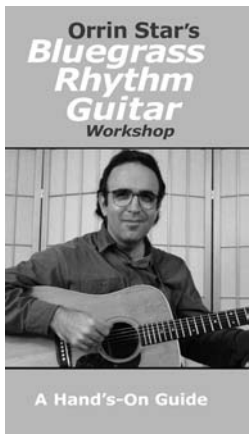
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Ocean of Diamonds

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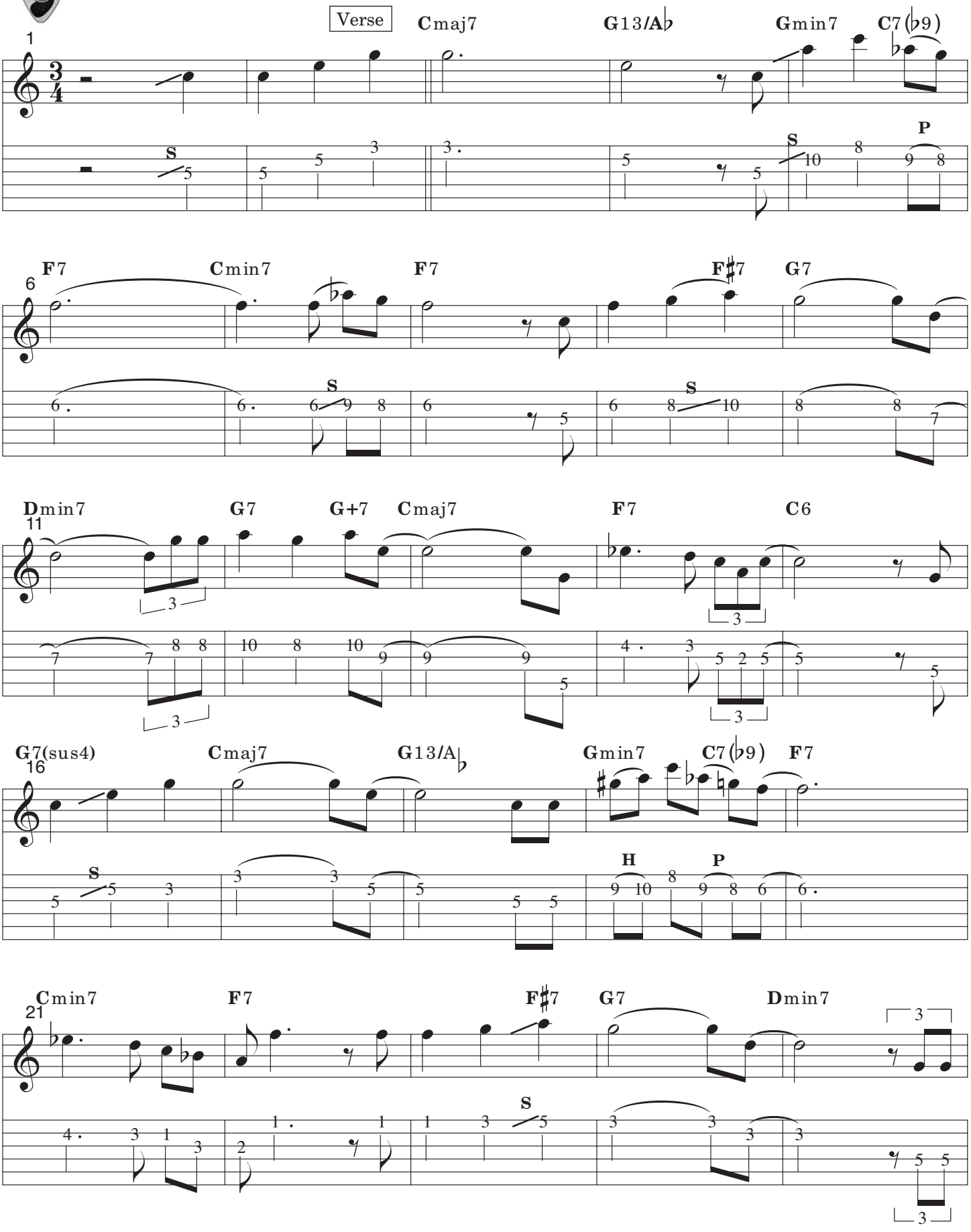
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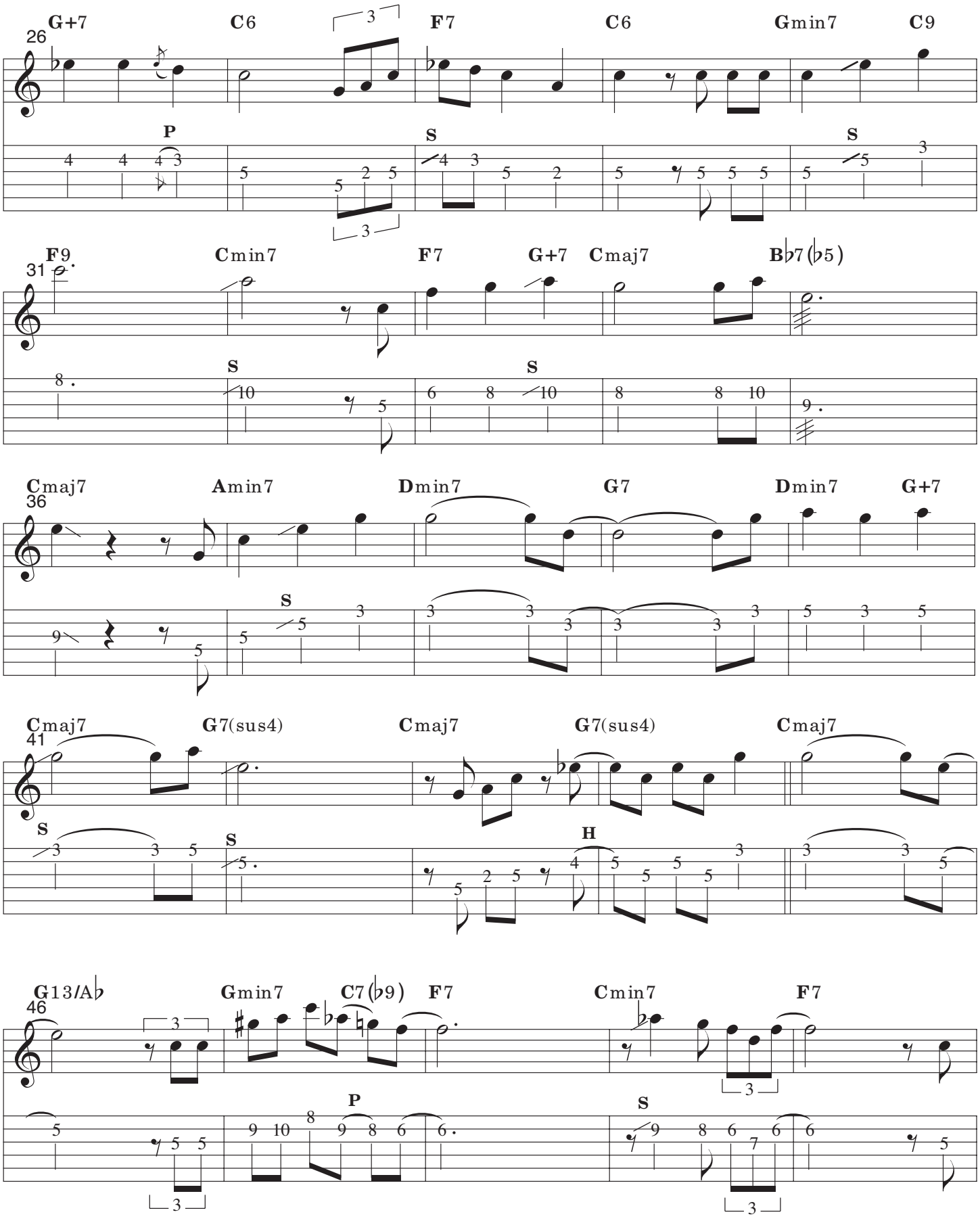
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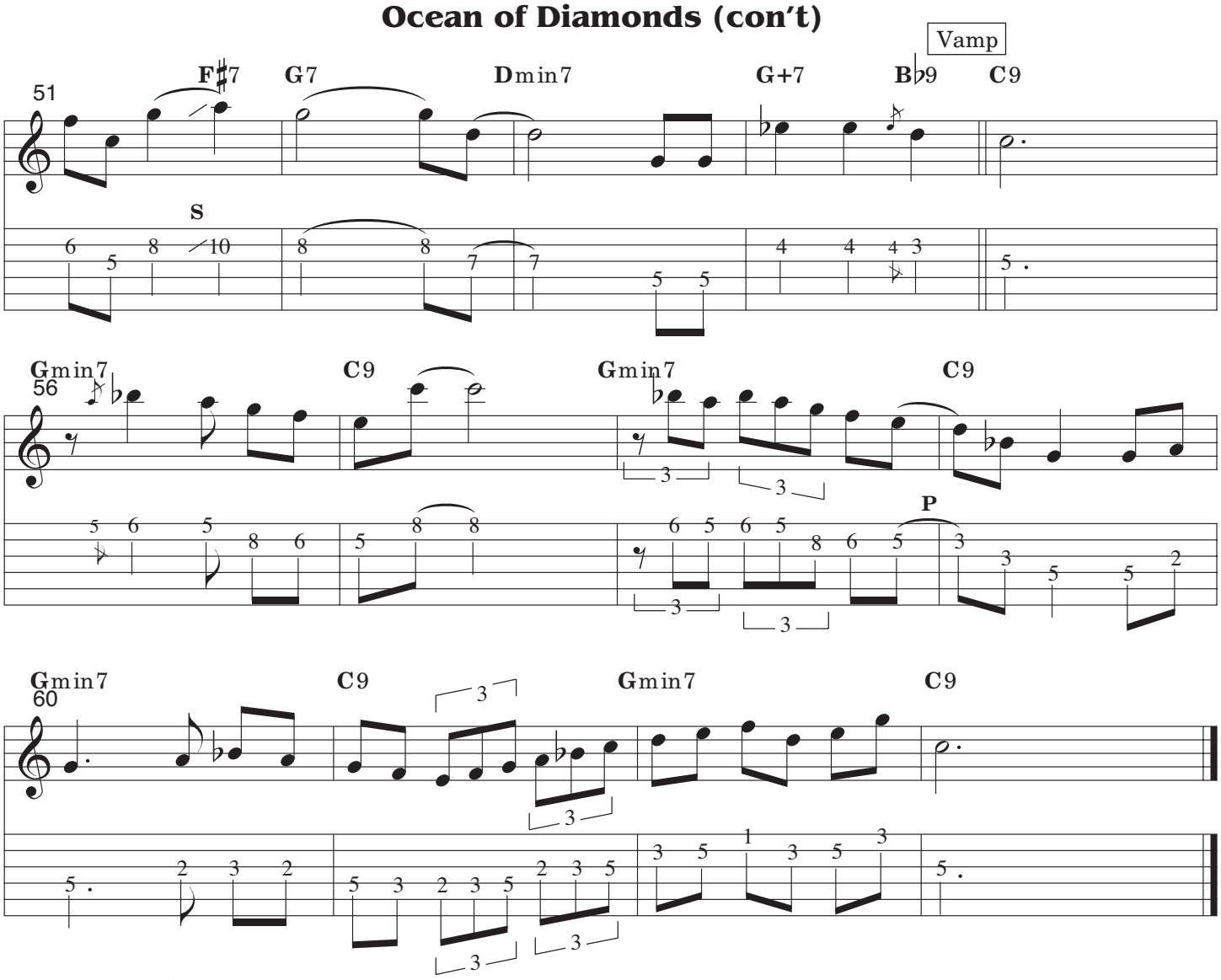

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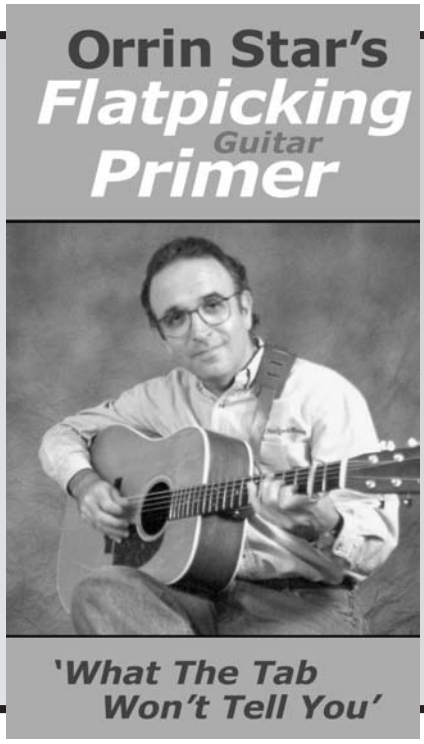

Flatpick Profile:

Audie Blaylock

Indiana's Rhythm King

by Orrin Star

Perhaps the most noteworthy thing about Audie Blaylock is that you don't really notice him at first. Though you see him singing and playing, except for the occasional blazing lead break he doesn't stand out in any obvious way. And that is by design: his skill at and devotion to blending in—both vocally and rhythmically—is so strong that he has the rare ability to almost disappear. He is a sideman's sideman. "My thing," he says, "is making the other musicians sound good."

As guitarist and harmony singer for Rhonda Vincent, one of today's most popular and hard working bluegrass performers, Audie is now something of a household name in bluegrass circles. But his relatively recent rise to prominence—like that of many professional bluegrass journeymen—was preceded by years of honing his craft, including a long tenure with Jimmy Martin.

Audie comes from a musical family from Virginia which settled in Lansing, Michigan. Both of his parents as well as sundry aunts and uncles played music at home. They were into both classic bluegrass and country, and Audie started playing guitar when he was just eight.

As a young teenager Audie was drawn to rock and roll and played electric guitar in a number of early bands. When he was seventeen he got the bluegrass bug again and joined his first bluegrass band, an ensemble called Deadwood. Since the group already had a guitarist, Audie took up the mandolin to round out the instrumentation. (His role as the group's tenor singer was equally pragmatic: though he hadn't sung harmony vocals before, that was the part that was needed in the group and so he jumped in and filled the breach.)

Performing with Deadwood at a number of Midwest festivals, Audie made the acquaintance of a number of musicians in headlining bands, including some who played with Jimmy Martin. On a Monday morning after one such festival Audie got a call from Jimmy asking if he wanted to join his band. Once he realized (after about 30 seconds) that the call was not a hoax by one of his bandmates, he accepted and flew down to Nashville later that week.

Audie was nineteen years old. He had been playing mandolin for just two years. And the second bluegrass band he ever joined was to be Jimmy Martin's! He was both terrified and excited. He played mandolin and sang tenor with Jimmy Martin for the next nine years.

It proved to be a tremendous education in all aspects of performing. Martin showed him how even the smallest things were important, things like how you stood on stage, how you looked, and how you carried yourself in public. "Musically he comes from an era where you really had to perform—you really had to attract someone's attention, be it musically or visually. If you speak to someone who is very confident there's an element of attention there. That's what he's trying to do, and he teaches that along with the music. I can't imagine what it must have been like to have seen Flatt and Scruggs pull into a venue and get out in those red jackets."

Jimmy also showed him "how to be solid all the way around—how to play consistently and strongly even on days or at times when you felt like you weren't up for it."

Musically Blaylock fell under the sway of the famous Martin timing. "He sharpened up my mandolin chop. And he teaches you how to listen sharply. There's several ways to play a beat. If there's five people in a band playing right on the beat sharply and one who is just a bit behind, that one guy will physically pull you back."

"He always stresses playing what fits, and a lot of times he would use the analogy--especially on a vocal tune—he would say 'play what I'm singing'." (After mentioning to him that I'd recently read a post on the net by Martin's current bass player saying that he'd been informed by his boss that slapping the bass simply "wasn't needed in Jimmy Martin's music." Audie said that he could envision Martin turning around mid-song and confronting the offending bassist with "Do you hear me doing that with my voice??")

Though he didn't play it with Martin on stage, the guitar has always been Audie's primary instrument, and his time with Martin had a formative impact on his guitar playing.

Foremost, he relates, there is the need to blend in with the vocals and to lay down a bed for the other instruments to play off. And this—save for the cannon-like bass

Photo: Stephanie Ledgin

Audie Blaylock with the King of Bluegrass, Jimmy Martin

runs—entails great subtlety: "Rhythm guitar is like baritone harmony. It glues the other elements together, but it doesn't really stand out by itself. But you'd notice it if it was missing."

The first time I saw Audie on stage (three years ago in New York City), the first thing I noticed about his rhythm playing was his right hand: it was in constant motion. When I asked him about it between sets he revealed that he was playing the very even, all-strum chucka-chucka chucka-chucka rhythm guitar style of Jimmy Martin. (That style differs, by the way, from the "Carolina slam" strumming popularized by the Lonesome River band in its evenness: there's no regular emphasis on the downbeats.)

In 1986, in the middle of his Jimmy Martin years, Audie relocated to Indiana from Michigan ("for a girl") and has called that state home ever since. He currently resides in Garret, Indiana, near Fort Wayne, with Lori, his wife of eight years.

After leaving Martin in early 1991, Audie did a lot of different things. He was first involved in a Chris Warner project that also included Dudley Connell but which never congealed. He also had his own bluegrass and country bands in Indiana around 1993. He worked with Red Allen, performed for a year with Lynn Morris (with future Rage bandmate Tom Adams on banjo), and then with Harley Allen during his country phase for a couple years.

When he was between bands or things were slow Audie did "a little of everything." He has a Class A commercial driver's license (trucking) and he also framed some houses ("boy, you don't want to do that and play the guitar").

Audie first heard Rhonda Vincent at the Bean Blossom Festival in 1999. He was drawn to the intensity and traditional quality of her sound, and he congratulated her briefly after her set. In a scenario reminiscent of how he came to Jimmy Martin's attention, Audie knew her banjo player at the time (Steve Sutton, a Jimmy Martin alumnus from the seventies), and jammed with him at the IBMA convention that fall. Steve mentioned Audie to Rhonda and Audie got a call from her almost immediately.

His initial stint with the band lasted only a few weeks: they were trying out a two guitar concept at the time with Rhonda playing fiddle, but she soon decided that fronting and fiddling didn't work for her, so Audie was let go for a time when Mike Cleaveland was hired to fiddle. But a few months later he was asked to return and he has been with her ever since.

Audie's varied talents are well-displayed on his self-released solo CD, *Trains Are The Only Way To Fly*. Recorded in the spring of 2001, it features a crack ensemble (with Tom Adams on banjo, Ron Stewart on fiddle, and Rhonda Vincent of harmony vocals) which delivers impeccable, driving bluegrass on an interesting selection of tunes.

Audie is philosophical but steadfast about the place of the rhythm guitarist in bluegrass. "There a lot of people that are under the impression that if you're not playing the banjo or the fiddle, or the mandolin then you're not as good a musician. Most people don't get in depth with music; they don't care about the intricacies of how a band works or how you get to that point. So, human nature has a tendency to only notice the things that stand out. So rhythm guitar is often overlooked."

"I have a saying: When you step up to the microphone and take a break, it's means just that. And when you're done with your break—like any other job—it's time to go back to work and play rhythm to support the rest of band. And that's not just the guitar. It's the mandolin and the banjo and the fiddle. Everyone plays rhythm."

Audie cites Jim Hurst ("a great all-around player"), Ron Block ("I love his lead playing"), and Becky Isaacs ("a phenomenal rhythm player") as among his favorite guitarists on the scene today.

Apart from the clarity and seriousness of his musical vision, what impressed me most about Audie was the way he'd arranged his life so that he was in a position to drop whatever he was doing and get on a plane or a bus to embrace an important playing opportunity. When Jimmy Martin (and later Rhonda Vincent) called to hire him he didn't hesitate; despite the uncertainties and the unknowns he knew what he had to do. "When the ring comes by," he told me, "you grab it."

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Trains Are The Only Way To Fly

Arranged by Audie Blaylock
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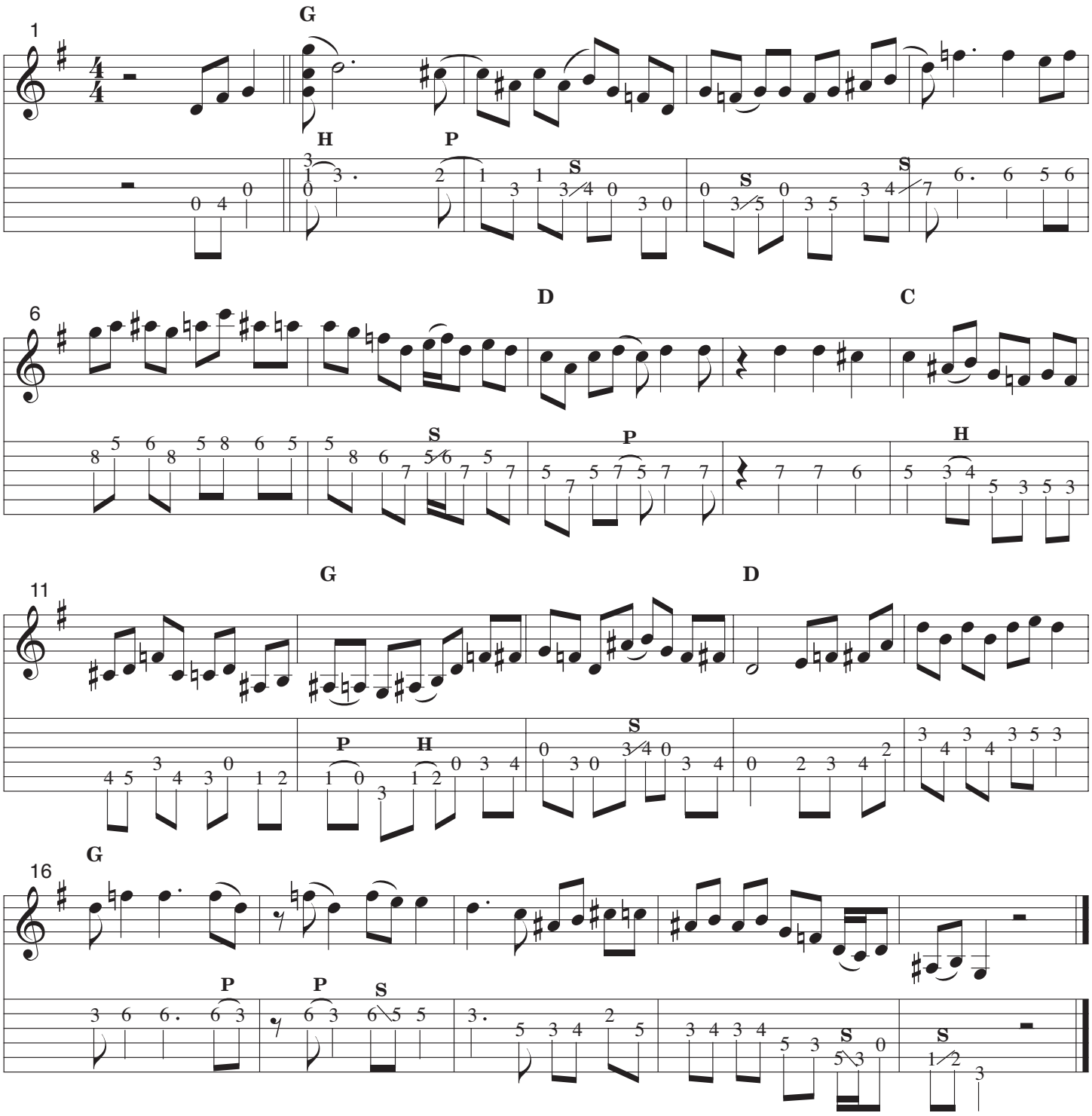
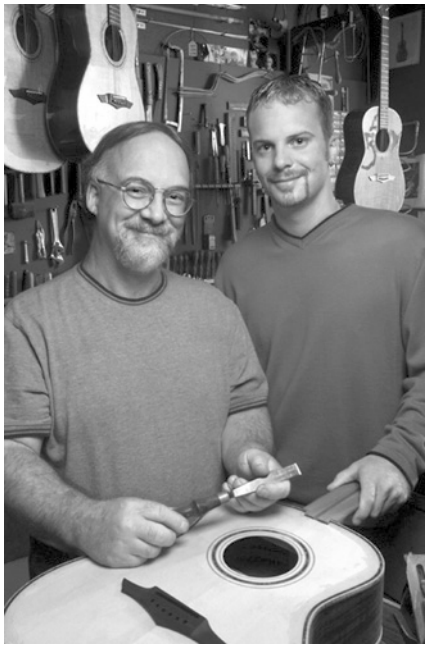

Bruce Petros Guitars

by Robert Thomas



"Meet the Parents," Luthier's version:

Prospective Father-in-law (PFIL): So young man, you want to marry my daughter?

Groom: Yes I do.

PFIL: And just how do you plan to support her?

Groom: Oh, I have that all figured out. I have a great plan.

PFIL: I'm glad. Let's hear it.

Groom: Okay. I'm going to learn a craft that I know nothing about, that takes years of study and practice to master. And I'm going to do it with no formal training.

PFIL: Hmmmm…

Groom: Then I'm going to build something that I have no idea that anyone will buy, and charge a really ambitious price for it—more than even the world famous factory producers charge. Finally, I'm going to make this product thousands of miles away from my prospective customers, so they'll either have to drive for days to inspect it, or buy it on trust by mail order.

PFIL: SON!! Give me a hug!

Groom: DAD! I knew you'd understand.

Okay, maybe it didn't happen exactly that way, but this is the essential origin of the Petros Guitar story. Bruce Petros has been making unique steel string guitars of rare quality by hand for over thirty years, and has carved out a respectable niche for himself in the pantheon of modern day luthiers. No small feat, toiling his entire career in his home–based shop in the veritable hotbed of guitar-making, Kaukauna, Wisconsin. That's about two hours north and west of Milwaukee, or just a little east of Appleton, once famous only for its prominent son, magician Harry Houdini.

Bruce—and now with his son Matthew (shown with Bruce in the photo above)—put a little magic in their guitars too. Bruce was generous in sharing some of it with me last June when I drove up to get the Petros experience. As a strictly bluegrass flatpicker, I wanted to check out his guitars when played with a plectrum—no fingerstyle analysis here.

Bruce's shop offered just what you'd hope to see when visiting one of these fiercely independent craftsman—cozy, tidy, organized, tools hanging ergonomically convenient to the workspace, and several instruments resting in the throes of various stages of creation around the shop. The engaging aroma of fresh wood wafted from the numerous tops, necks, backs, sides, and purfling all numbered and tucked into their private spaces, waiting their turn in the process.

Bruce recently transferred his shop from the basement to the first floor, "to a place where the sun could shine in, my dream." The shop is divided into two rooms, one (about 15 x 30) where the sawing, joining, bracing and lumber storage occurs and another room (about 8 x 15) where guitar parts are finished and dried. A short corridor takes you to his showroom, where four or five of his models hang on display (some completed just hours before), waiting for the occasional walk-in customer. Skeptical about the idea of a customer actually walking in and buying, Bruce recounts that earlier this year a local came in to pick up her repair job. She was surprised to see new instruments hanging on the wall. She took one in hand, picked for few minutes, and pulled out her checkbook.

When you've seen a Petros guitar, it's not surprising to hear that someone bought one at first sight. The guitars have incredible "curb appeal," from the curvy headstock (ebony black with the Petros name in pearl) down the long, slender-looking necks (a mirage, since they're 1 13/16" standard) culminating with the graceful, flowing shapes of the body. The guitars' waists are cinched a bit more than the traditional Martin D shape, both for sound and looks and to help it sit better on the knee.

When I asked Bruce about the slightly wider neck, wondering if my own diminutive hands could fit around it comfortably, he gleefully held up his own stubby mitts (a clear 3 glove sizes short of mine). "It's the lean shape that offsets the slightly wider top of the neck. I can play it comfortably, fret the notes cleanly, and get great tone. And if I can, you can." My own trial proved this out. The necks offer a degree of comfort I hadn't found in many guitars I'd tried. Bruce couldn't understand why anyone would want a V-shape or skinnier neck, but would produce one if a customer requested it.

The other noticeable feature is the finish. Each Petros guitar sports a shimmering polyurethane coat so smooth and even it looks like it was dipped. But Bruce uses the spray method, applying six coats, sanding between each one with increasingly fine paper, and buffing after the final coat. The finish takes about a third of the total

build-time, but according to this Wisconsin luthier, it's worth doing well. As for the finish materials, Bruce feels polyurethane is more durable, doesn't crack and produces a better tone than nitrocellulose.

For a number of years Bruce only offered the D model (the closest Petros model to a traditional bluegrass flatpick machine) and the FS, for the fingerstylers. He never tries to force out a new model, relying more on the occasional flashes of artistic inspiration. Enjoying one of those a few months ago, he went from conception to design to construction in a short three months, and the Grand Concert model was born.

Bruce feels that a couple of features make his guitars truly unique. First is the pre-stressed arch top on every Petros. As such, one could never truly call a Petros an "old flat-top." The 30" radius of the arch top is far less than the curve on a genuine arch top, whose tops are actually carved and have a much smaller radius. The tops are glued in a vacuum press, and all braces are custom fitted to tops. "No factory could ever automate this process with the precision that we do in our shop" Bruce claims, "and to do it by hand would be too expensive on a mass basis." Bruce believes the arching increases the harmonic overtones and trebles, giving his guitars a degree of balance unique to the Petros. The arched top is also much more stable than a floppy flat top.

A strum on one of his models certainly does produce a rich palette of sound. I found the bass to be less prominent, and mentioned it to Bruce. "Listen again," the luthier replied. "It's not the lack of bass: it's the presence of the full range that puts the bass range in its appropriate portion." Bruce's total philosophy rails against producing guitars that are either only bass cannons or treble kings, but cannot deliver on the entire spectrum of sound range. Petros guitar tops are also graduated around the edges to optimize bass vibrations, without becoming floppy. Braces are scalloped and the pattern is symmetrical.

A second Petros specialty is the fully compensated bone saddle with the back angled tilt and his spruce/ebony bridge plate. Bruce designed this to enhance the transfer of vibration from the strings to the top.

Finally Bruce points out the Petros neck. In the luthier world, necks can come in one piece, sometimes in a multi-layer laminate sandwich, or some even attached somehow in segments. Bruce came up with a design of "book-matched" mahogany pieces glued together side to side, with a horizontal lamination between the fingerboard and neck. This method maximizes strength while allowing him to reduce bulk and weight. Bruce exclusively uses the traditional dove-tail method for attaching necks, but concedes that the art of bolting on necks has probably caught up to the traditional method, if done right.

Born in suburban Chicago, Bruce moved to the Appleton area at age 6, and never left. He loves the serenity of the northland, and sources many of his woods locally. He finds the Wisconsin Walnut especially toneworthy, but also sources his woods from Alaska, Canada, and as far away as Malaysia. He hasn't jumped whole hog on the cocabola bandwagon, but also hasn't found it to be as troublesome under the tools as some luthiers. He showed me his "ultimate flatpicking monster," a recently finished D model with ebony back & sides with an Adirondack red spruce top. Ebony is somewhat rare in that use, but Petros finds it very reminiscent of Brazilian rosewood without the cost and the cracking.

Bruce's lutherie skills evolved through a journey that started with building dulcimers, then repairing violins, then guitar-building, on to furniture and cabinets, then organ building, and finally back home to making steel string guitars. He's gathered a lot of knowledge of woods, joining and finishing from all these disciplines. He cranked out his first guitar at age 20, selling his first in about 1973. Poring over every book he could get his hands on, and traveling to luthiers' conventions around the country, Bruce also experimented with a lot of good old fashioned trial and error. He feels his lack of formal training is a blessing, freeing him from the traditional conventions of the craft.

Most of Bruce's sales come from phone orders, generated from his ads in the trade magazines. He has five or six dealers, but he feels that marketing is definitely not his strong suit. He saw his guitars on TV this year at the Grammy awards broadcast when Paul Simon's guitar player, Mark Stewart, played his Petros. Stewart owns three! Bruce supplements his income through sales of his instrument polish, fingerboard oil, and miracle finish restorer. He wouldn't reveal his ingredients, but of course they contain no silicones (the death of guitar finishes everywhere!). He also sells some unique and fetching accessories, including a new set of wooden tuner buttons that were stunning.

The future of Petros guitars appears to be in good hands, literally, with 24 year-old son Matthew joining Bruce a few years ago full-time. I witnessed Matthew installing purfling and attaching a top, working with confidence and precision. Bruce and Matthew generally will share the tasks on each instrument, but both can build one from start to finish. Bruce handles most of the inlay work, which is tastefully applied, in the models I saw.

Bruce was glad to show me all stages of his production process, pointing out the numerous custom-made jigs and tools he had created over the years. The inspiration for these designs has come from unexpected sources. He recently accompanied his wife to a dress shop while she fitted up for an upcoming friend's wedding. Something in the fabric patterns struck his eye, and he quickly jotted down a few notes and sketches. Over the course of the next few weeks he had produced new jigs and the model for the aforementioned tuner buttons. So Bruce always keeps his antenna up for new ideas and inspirations.

Now for the real question: How would a Petros stand up in a bluegrass jam? They certainly had the power and live feel "right out of the box" that many guitars only develop over time. There was an unquestionable bass thump when I plucked the low E string fretted to G, and the guitar was never even close to breaking up when I gave it a campfire-power strum. The volume and power of notes further up the neck was very impressive, as was the tuning. I did not have the chance to jam with a Petros guitar. But I am certain beyond a shadow of a doubt that it would more than hold its own volume-wise. The tone? Tone is a matter of individual taste of course. Its tone definitely leaned more to the sweet, shimmering side (as opposed to the dry, old-Martin sound). I loved it. Its richness would be a delight to hear and play for years. I think it would sound sensational in a jam—and can't wait to try.

Petros guitars can be sampled at Rudy's Music in New York; The Podium in Minneapolis; Klein's Sonoma Music in Sonoma, California; Fine Guitar Consultants in San Diego; Acoustic Pro Musician in Texas; The Musik Room in Charlotte NC; or at Bruce's home shop in Central Wisconsin. They can also be viewed online at www.PetrosGuitars.com.

The Solo Flatpicker

by Dan Crary

The Quiet Beauty of the Church Lick

Audio CD Tracks 20-21

Lately I've been conducting a little informal poll at workshops. The question asked is, "How many of you ever actually perform a tune or piece of music you learned by tablature?" In a room of 50 or a hundred people, the number will be from zero to two, never more. And these are rooms where there are a lot of people who play for other people, many of them soloists like you, my faithful readers here. Virtually no one performs music learned from a tab.

I'm coming to the conclusion that we need to take some different approaches: learn through multiple methods, and maybe get less reliant on tabbed music. And you solo flatpickers need some ways to actually get you somewhere, so that your playing is musical and in control without you having to sit down and rote memorize a bunch of stuff.

Another piece of data I've gleaned from workshops is that people are hungry for some way to move into improvising and also making up their own versions of tunes and instrumental moves in songs. Another word for this is "musician." Well, read on, my friends, because I think I know how to get you there if you're not already there. It'll take a couple or three columns to do it, but we begin here, now.

First let's revisit the old bass-strum pattern of accompaniment, called the "church lick." In previous columns I ranted at us about cleaning up our backup, and I want you to check to see that your rhythm lick is in good shape. On 1 and 3 you play a bass note, but it's not just a swipe at a random note. Instead, the bass note should have that solid, crisp, thank-God-and-Charlie-Waller clarity of a single note played deliberately and well. This is actually worth practice. You'd be surprised how much slop will go away when you start playing your bass notes clean.

Then check your strum on 2 and 4. Make sure it's a really precise little quick arpeggio occurring only on the top three strings. If you play a back stroke on "and" after 2 and 4, play just one string on the backstroke.

OK, now let's start thinking of this in a "Wildwood Flower" way. In "Wildwood Flower" (WWF), you get the miracle of melody and accompaniment together. The first time I heard this I was thirteen years old and looking for a style. One night an old boy named Bud Hunt played WWF on a Kansas City country music show called The Brush Creek Follies and it opened up the universe for me. It can do sorta do the same for you as well.

Notice how "Wildwood Flower" works (follow me on this one): basically you hold the top notes of a chord throughout, just keep the fingers on those high notes, except to change to another chord, and then you finger the top notes of that chord. But that leaves a couple of left hand fingers left over to play the notes of a tune, usually on the lower strings of the guitar. So you can play melody on the bass strings, and when there's a pause or opportunity to substitute a strum for a melody note, you can pick the melody and once in a while strum the chord you're keeping ready with those other two fingers.

So here's a very specific assignment: First, brush up on your church lick to get it lean and mean and make it deliberate and clean and solid. Then, put the guitar down. Get rid of it, and do not play until you've completed this next step: memorize a tune so that you can hum or whistle or sing it. I'd suggest something solid like "John Henry," or maybe a familiar gospel song, basically some tune you can memorize by listening to it. A tune you already know is OK, but it must be one you can hum or whistle accurately, with no tabs anywhere in the picture.

Next, figure out what key you want to get this tune into. G is a good starting place, especially for "John Henry," and find the tune on the bass strings of the guitar in that key. Again, find the tune yourself, without any music or tab.

Then when you can sorta get through the basic melody of the tune, and you know where it falls on the lower strings, the next thing is to finger just the top note or notes of the chord, pick out the melody on the lower strings and find a spot once in a while to strum the chord whose top notes you're holding. Of course, it's a trick to find places to brush the chord and also maintain the timing of the tune. But you don't need tab for that, either. If you really get the tune to where it's familiar and solid, you'll be able, by a process of trying and changing things to get to a version that's solid.

One other thing: I want you to stay with this until you have a memorized version of this piece that you can play exactly the same way every time. This is important, for many reasons: the first one is that a precise, memorized version that you learned "by ear" will have a greater impact on all your playing than just one tune. This one tune will sound great, but the rest of your playing will notch upward with this discipline.

If you've never done anything like this, it will take you a few days, maybe a couple of weeks until it's polished up. Take your time, but don't give up until it's there, and when it is, I can guarantee you that it will ripple out over all your playing. No kidding, this works, so go forth and teach yourself how to play something. Next time, we'll take this foundation and go somewhere else, a very cool somewhere that you'll want to be ready for. So go for it …. And ah-ah-ah—no tabs (I know, nag, nag, nag).

Masters of Rhythm Guitar

Kathy Chiavola

by Joe Carr

Fans of Kathy Chiavola are no doubt aware of her tremendous vocal talents. With killer expression, emotion, dynamics, beautiful tone and just plain power, she alternately sends shivers down listeners' spines and brings tears to their eyes. She is so impressive as a vocalist that it is easy to overlook her great rhythm guitar accompaniment. Not only does she accompany her own singing impeccably, but she has worked with a who's-who of today's hottest pickers. Always a sensitive and responsive musician, she is a true master of rhythm guitar. I caught up with Kathy by telephone at her Nashville home. The interview is an edited compilation of our telephone interview and Kathy's emailed responses to a questionnaire.

What are your first memories of music?

It would have been as a little child, singing music with my family in Chicago. Music was always such a part of our lives I don't recall a time when it wasn't. Mom was a music major at Eastern Kentucky University, played violin, viola and piano. Dad sang opera and standards. My sisters and I studied piano, sang in church choir, and listened only to classical music as children.

How old were you when you began to play?

When I was twelve, my mother bought a guitar for herself and the girl across the street bought one as well. So I picked it up one day and began learning chords from a book Mom had. My mother had acquired some recordings of folk music including a Longines Symphonette compilation of festival recordings featuring folk performers. It included Joan Baez, Doc Watson, some old blues artists, the Weavers and anybody who would have been playing at a folk festival in the late 60s.

What did you think of that music?

I loved it! I played it over, over, over and over again. Then I discovered the Vanguard and Electra labels had music like this. I would save up five dollars and I'd go buy a new album. I heard the Kweskin Jug Band, Flatt and Scruggs, The Greenbrier Boys, and The New Lost City Ramblers. The Greenbrier Boys, especially, sounded very funny. High, whiney and fast—I couldn't make heads or tails out of it. But I did love Doc Watson. He was very accessible.

What kinds of music were you playing on guitar?

It was finger style stuff. I remember going with the girl across the street who was taking lessons from a high school girl. I just sort of tagged along and I would learn. It was Travis picking and a little bit of blues and mostly accompaniment styles for singing. As a young teenager in Kansas City, I tried to find anyone, anywhere to teach me anything, but there wasn't much available. I ended up learning from records, a few pickers, and eventually laid the guitar aside at age 16 for 12 years. I joined a rock and roll band at the age of 15. I didn't play the right style for the band and they didn't know how to teach me so I basically quit playing guitar.

How did folk music jive with your "serious" music studies?

Serious music was something that I loved and I felt obligated to do because of the talent that I had …and because of the expectations that my family, my extended family and my teachers had for me.

Did you have formal vocal training?

I received a scholarship [in voice] to the Oberlin Conservatory of Music where I earned my bachelor's and master's degrees in vocal performance. I then studied in a doctoral program at Indiana University [Bloomington] for two years with Metropolitan Opera star Eileen Farrell.

Something changed. Can you explain?

In 1978, I was teaching private voice lessons to banjo player Mark Epstein who had a group. I had become disenchanted with the classical music world. I realized I didn't want to be an opera singer. I had explored that world and performed with

several opera companies and had devoted the last seven years of my life to becoming an opera singer. I knew inside that I didn't want to do it.

When Mark told me he had a bluegrass band, I got very excited. I went to hear them and was asked to sit in with and later, to join the group. They had to teach me how to play with a flatpick. I began to listen to what was going on in bluegrass and acoustic music. I just went crazy. I went nuts. I knew this was what I wanted to do.

How did you come to move to Nashville?

After I joined Mark's bluegrass band, I started meeting all the bluegrass musicians in Bloomington, Indiana: Bob Lucas, Nell Levin, Brian Lappin, Jeff White, Larry Wexer, and Glen Duncan to name a few. After playing with various groups in the area for about two years, I decided to move to Nashville in 1980. During this time I also met and played with Edgar Meyer, a bassist who was also a student at IU.

Did you know anybody there?

I made a couple of trips to Nashville with Nell Levin who introduced me to some bluegrass pickers. The first time I walked into the Station Inn I heard Pat Enright and Alan O'Bryant and I was transported. I just knew that's where I wanted to be.

What was your plan for working in Nashville?

I thought I would concentrate on singing sessions [recording]. I did a vocal demo session my first day in town for Kent Blazy and got into session work right away. I found an apartment on music row with a Vanderbilt student who was a big bluegrass fan. She invited Susie Monick and Ingrid Reese of the Bushwackers [bluegrass band] over for a party. Ginger Boatwright was the leader of that group. They asked me to go to Texas for some dates. I borrowed a bass and an amp from Jim Brock [the Osborne Brothers' bass player] and went on tour never having played bass and just faked it!

So now you are in the bluegrass biz.

Yeah. I played with them a year and then I joined Doug Dillard. The group included Ginger Boatwright, Billy Constable, and many others over the years. That was 1981 to 1985.

Were you working in Nashville between road gigs?

Those first couple of years, I did sessions and played and starved! I didn't start teaching in Nashville until maybe '84. I was at the Station Inn or at a jam every night.

What happened next?

I played bass a summer or two with Vassar Clements. Then I put together a

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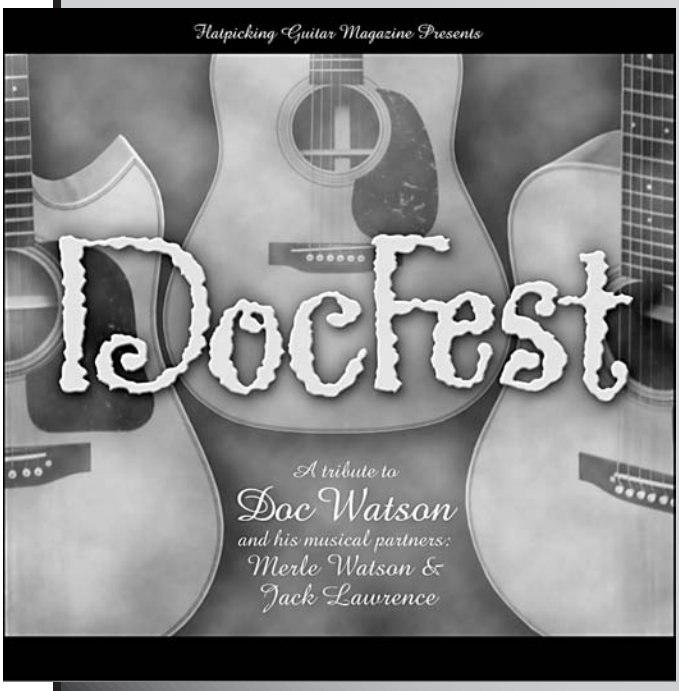

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Reuben's Train (Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally)
Old Camp Meeting Time (Kenny & Amanda Smith)
Deep River Blues (Jim Hurst & Missy Raines)
Salt Creek/Bill Cheathum (Wyatt Rice, Tim Stafford & Rushad Eggleston)
Alberta/Billy In The Lowground (Orrin Star & Russell Scholle)
Train That Carried My Girl From Town (Brad Davis & Whitewater)
Way Downtown (John Tindel & RST)
Cotton Eyed Joe (David Grier)
A-Roving On A Winter's Night (Chris & Sally Jones)
The Crawdad Song (Brad Davis & Dan Miller)
Rainbow (Steve Kaufman & Roy Curry)
Little Sadie (Adam Granger)
More Pretty Girls Than One (Craig Vance & Chris Leske)
Black Mountain Rag (Steve Pottier & Barry Soloman)
The Lone Journey (John McGann & Chris Moore)
Southbound (Joe Carr & Alan Munde)
Matty Groves (Larry Keel & Rushad Eggleston)

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group called the Lucky Dogs with Edgar Meyer, Bela Fleck, and Jerry Douglas. I also had a group with Mark Shatz, Bobby Clark, Charlie Cushman, and Stuart Duncan. We played pretty much just around Nashville. I also played bass with the Country Gazette and recorded on their Strictly Instrumental record. I played Garrison Keillor's show [*A Prairie Home Companion*] twice with the Gazette. Around that time, I was really working towards getting a Nashville country record deal.

Tell us about that.

I was doing a lot of session work at that time especially for Polygram publishing and they were interested helping me get a deal. I got very close [to a deal] with every record label in town. Had I pursued it with more of a vengeance, I would have gotten signed, but I lost my fire for that. There were too many compromises. Again, I was doing what was expected of me.

Tell us about your guitar playing at that time.

I was backing up fiddle players like Buddy Spicher; jamming a lot; playing behind Buddy, Vassar, Stuart, Buddy Griffin, Blaine Sprouse, Frazier Moss, Craig Duncan, Glen Duncan, all the Duncans…

Did these fiddlers like your guitar playing?

I think so! Buddy taught me some chords. He is "Mister Jazz Chord."

What happened between *Labor of Love* and *The Harvest*?

I met Randy Howard in 1990 at the Bluegrass Inn in Nashville. I played with him and we hit it off immediately. Stuart Duncan had been playing with me but he got a gig with the Nashville Bluegrass Band. So Randy joined my band and immediately roped me into backing him up at fiddle contests. It was very frightening.

Playing rhythm for Randy must have been very demanding.

It was demanding in that he knew so many tunes and he was intense! He would like to practice as many tunes as possible a few hours before competing; non-stop; all day long, so it was an ordeal. He didn't decide what he was going to play until just before walking on to stage. I couldn't remember the names of all these tunes and I'd say "Hum a few bars of that 'Blackjack' for me, would you, Randy?" He would freak out that I didn't remember how it went. He never told me how he wanted me to play; he showed me with his playing. We got to where we really interacted and made some fire happen. He was such an amazingly strong player that you couldn't not play. You had to get in there and play! I have the wonderful experience of playing with great strong musicians.

This was the Kathy Chiavola Band?

Yes, Randy and I had this band and then Roy Husky joined four years before he died. I started getting some invitations to come to Europe. So Randy and I traveled there together maybe twenty times.

How did they know about you?

My records were released over there. I sent *Labor of Love* to be reviewed by Country Music People and editor Craig Baguley called and asked if he could release it on his own label Ragged But Right. Later I sent *The Harvest* over to Demon records, Elvis Costello's label, and they released it. So with the subsequent critical acclaim, I started getting invitations from festivals.

How did *The Harvest* recording happen?

It was time to record an album after ten years! I had all these songs I'd been doing for years that I wanted to record. I invited Chet Atkins and Bill Monroe. I knew these people weren't going to be around forever and as it turns out, they weren't. A lot of people I had been influenced by were on the album like Emmy Lou Harris, Harley Allen and old friends like Bela, Tony Rice, and Vince Gill. Of course, there was my band of the time: Randy, Roy Husky, and Brent Truitt.

How did the Monroe cut come about?

I asked Bill if he would record a song on my album. He was home recuperating from hip surgery and we brought engineer Vic Gebany and an ADAT machine out to his cabin. We sat out in his yard and sang a few tunes and decided we'd do "Stay Away From Me, You're Causing Me Trouble" and "The Old, Old House," which hasn't been released.

Tell us about Chet Atkins.

When I asked him to record "I Am A Pilgrim" he exclaimed, "Oh no I couldn't do that, I can't play like Merle Travis. You know

that's the first record I ever bought in 1947. You know, Merle Travis was my idol."I said, "Well, if you play like Chet Atkins, that'll be fine with me!" [laughter][Chet agreed to overdub his guitar part to Kathy's rhythm tracks privately in his home studio] So when we got the tape back we couldn't get it to synchronize properly and we thought Chet had lost it and was playing way out of time! [Laughter] We thought, "What are we going to do? Chet's playing way out of time, he's not even close!" [Laughter] But it turns out we didn't have the machine set correctly, and when we fixed it, Chet sounded great! But it was a scary few moments before we figured that out!

How have you learned to play so many rhythm styles so well?

[long pause] Listening and watching people…down at the Station Inn glued—just glued—to Alan O'Bryant's right hand or Pat Enright, Roland [White], Steve Cooley, David Grier, Tony Rice, Joe Carr, Harley Allen, everybody. I worked with [fiddler] Craig Duncan on probably a thousand gigs at Opryland. I had to fake it many, many times. And that's one way of learning -just being on the spot having to play songs you've never played before. That was really my practice room. I've learned informally. I remember [banjo player] James McKinney showing me a little swing pattern that I use to this day. I have sat down with a hundred musicians and asked them to show me something.

Do the songs you choose to sing drive your guitar playing and learning?

Yes, totally. As a singer, first and foremost, I know what makes me sound good so I was well aware of what a performer wants from an accompanist even before I started accompanying fiddle players down here [in Nashville] and playing in bands. A rhythm guitar player who doesn't sing, in my opinion, is limited. Even if they decide not to perform, they should start singing just to learn about the role of a singer and the role of the accompanist.

Kathy's band in the 1990s included Roy Husky, Brent Truitt, and Randy Howard. After Husky's untimely death from lung cancer in 1997, the group used Nashville Bluegrass Band bassist Gene LeBay. When Randy became sick shortly thereafter, the group took fewer and fewer gigs. Kathy devoted herself to Randy's needs in the last years of his life. When Randy died in 1999, Kathy stopped playing for a year or so.

Randy and Kathy had recorded four songs for a duo recording. Kathy pulled some old tracks that weren't used on *The Harvest* album and went back into the studio with Brent Truitt, David Grier, and some other guests. *From Where I Stand* was finished about a year after Randy passed away with all the songs Kathy and Randy would have done as a duo. It is a moving tribute to her musical partner.

Today, Kathy once again has an increasingly busy schedule teaching voice full-time at Belmont University; writing; singing the lead in the Nashville Ballet/Nashville Chamber Orchestra production of The Belle Witch Story; touring with her band [Steve Thomas, Aaron Till, Richard Bailey]; playing duo dates with David Grier; and giving vocal workshops. Information about Kathy's concerts and CDs is available at www.kathychiavola.com

Equipment: Kathy's main stage guitar is a 1952 Martin D-18. She still has the 1964 D-18. She uses D'Addario medium phosphor bronze strings. She uses a McKinney Tony Rice style capo.

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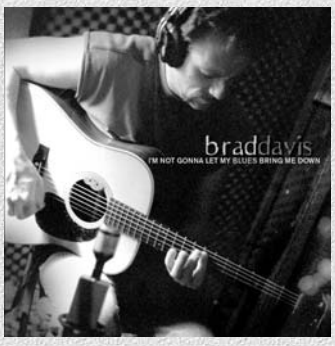
Brad Davis brings his acoustic guitar and songwriting talent to the forefront with the release of his new solo recording *I'm Not Gonna Let My Blues Bring Me Down*. Speical guests include: **Earl Scruggs, Billy Bob Thornton, Sam Bush, David Grier, Rob Ickes, Greg Davis, Tommy Shaw, John Jorgenson, Jon Randall, Glen Duncan, and Kelly Nolf**



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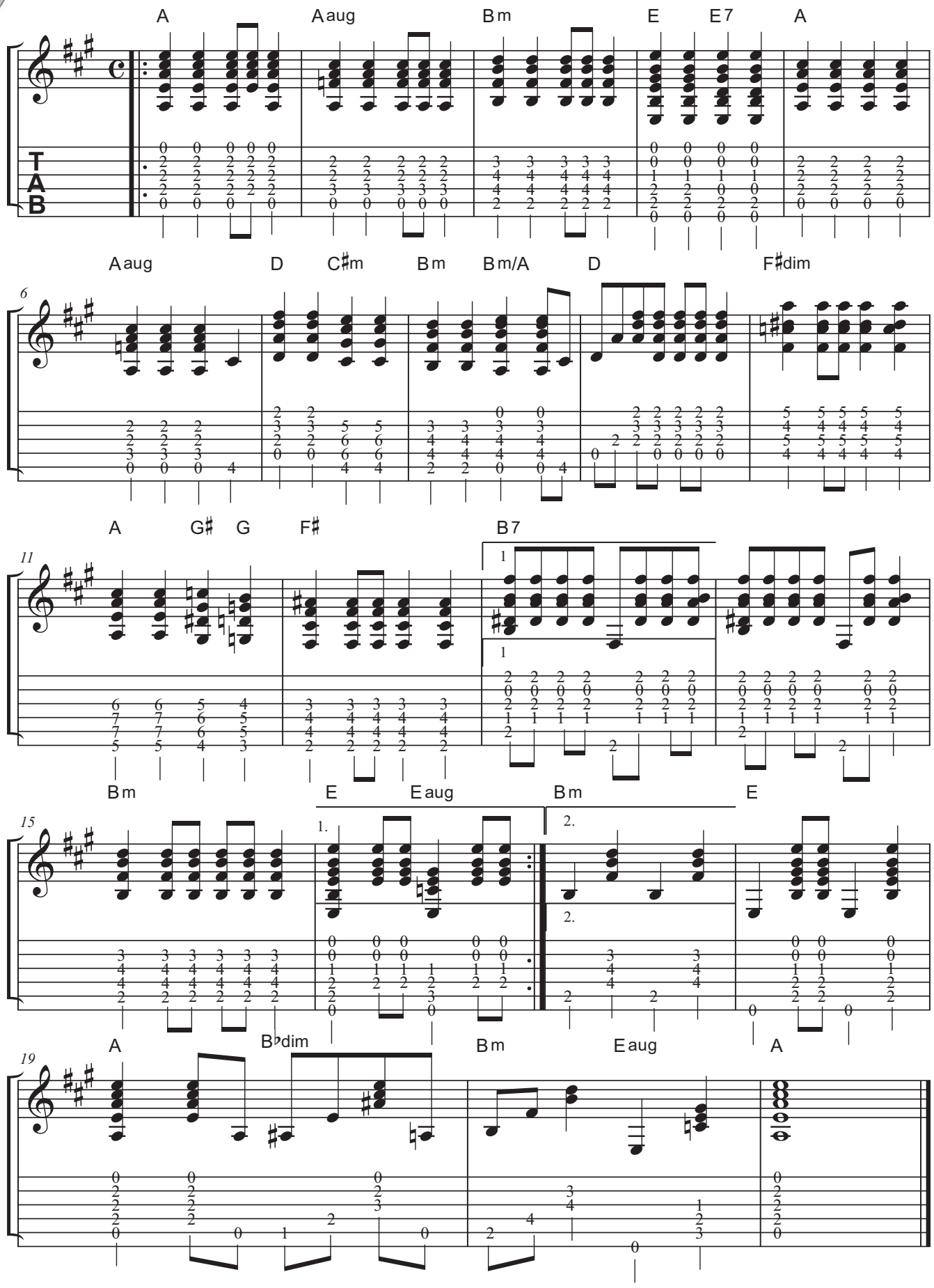
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Grooving Rhythm!

How do you make your rhythm groove and feel like it's right in the pocket? It's actually very simple if you take it baby steps (and there's nothing wrong with gradual progress). There are many variations to rhythm technique, but the variations are all based on the simple fact that there are only so many beats per measure. If the time signature changes then the amount of beats per measure will change too. A 4/4 time signature has eight beats for each measure. A 3/4 or waltz signature has six beats total per measure and so on. Below I have tabbed out four simple variations of rhythm.

Example 1:

Example 1 involves a hard stroke on the top two or three strings (strings around where the base note resides). This hard stroke must land on first beat—the down beat—of the measure. Follow the hard stroke with light strumming of down-down-down-up-down-up. Sometimes these soft strums are referred to as "ghosted strumming."

Example 2:

Example 2 involves making a slight modification to example 1. Hit the first stroke hard and then the next down stroke hard as well, followed by ghosted strumming.

Example 3:

Example 3 involves picking a bass note on the first and third beat of the measure. Follow each of these bass notes with a down strum. These bass notes can be the same. It is always a good idea to alternate them too.

Example 4:

Example 4 involves making a slight modification to example 3. Hit your first bass note and then crosspick a pattern within the chord structure. Then hit your second bass note follow by crosspicking. Here's the crosspicking pattern you use: from a G chord, pick the 6th string third fret for bass note number 1. Pick an up-stroke on the 4th string. Pick a down-stroke on the 3rd string. Pick an up-stroke on the 2nd string. Pick your second bass note and repeat the crosspicking pattern exactly as before. Different chords will require different string patterns during crosspicking. Work slowly, stepping like a two-year-old until you can get number one and then go for two, three and then four. I recommend using a metronome or tape a rhythm beat on any kind on a recorder for play back. Just make sure that the tempo remains steady throughout. Pick a song that has three chords in it. Make sure it is a song that you know very very well. This way you can concentrate on the rhythm and not on learning a brand new tune. Good luck and have fun picking. I sure do!

Questions? Direct them to me at bdmpublishing@comcast.net. For artist representation, contact Paul Riggins (paul@acousticmusicmanagement.com) of Acoustic Music Management, 276.620.0886.

Audio CD Tracks 16-19

Grooving Rhythm

Key-G

Rhythm Example #1

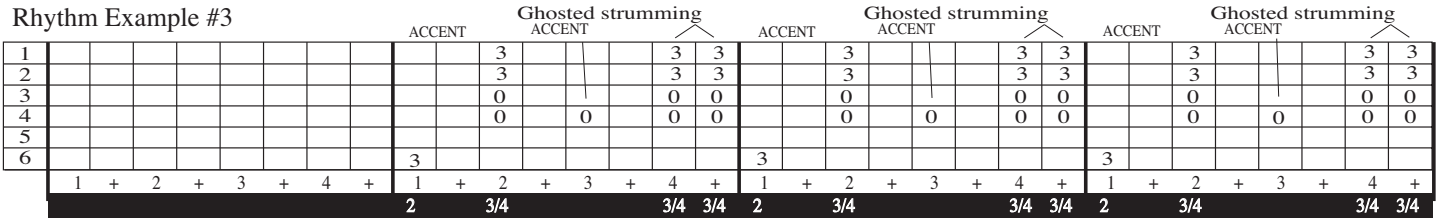
	ACCENT			Ghosted strumming						ACCENT			Ghosted strumming						ACCENT			Ghosted strumming					
1				3	3	3	3	3	3				3	3	3	3	3	3				3	3	3	3	3	3
2				3	3	3	3	3	3				3	3	3	3	3	3				3	3	3	3	3	3
3				0	0	0	0	0	0				0	0	0	0	0	0				0	0	0	0	0	0
4			0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0		0		0	0	0	0	0	0
5			2								2									2							
6			2 3								2 3									2 3							
	1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +		1	+ 2	+ 3	+ 4	+			1	+ 2	+ 3	+ 4	+					1	+ 2	+ 3	+ 4	+				
			1/2	3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	1/2		3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4		1/2		3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	

Rhythm Example #2

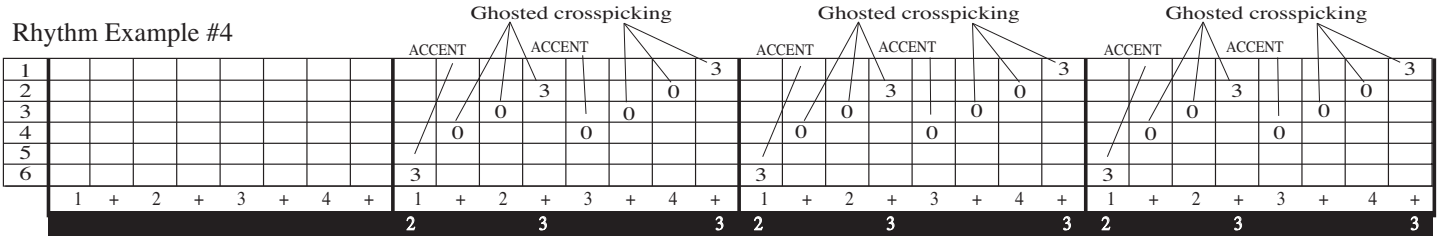
	ACCENT	ACCENT		Ghosted strumming						ACCENT	ACCENT		Ghosted strumming						ACCENT	ACCENT		Ghosted strumming					
1				3		3	3	3	3				3		3	3	3	3				3		3	3	3	3
2				3		3	3	3	3				3		3	3	3	3				3		3	3	3	3
3				0		0	0	0	0				0		0	0	0	0				0		0	0	0	0
4			0	0		0	0	0	0			0	0		0	0	0	0			0	0		0	0	0	0
5			2	2								2	2								2	2					
6			2 3	3								2 3	3								2 3	3					
	1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +		1	+ 2	+ 3	+ 4	+			1	+ 2	+ 3	+ 4	+					1	+ 2	+ 3	+ 4	+				
			1/2	3/4		3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	1/2		3/4		3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4		1/2		3/4		3/4	3/4	3/4	3/4	

Key-G

Rhythm Example #3



Rhythm Example #4



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Gypsy Jazz Guitar

by Paul Mehling

Rhythm Guitar for Bluegrass and Beyond

This month I'll share with you my Rhythm Guitar Manifesto that I give to all the incoming rhythm guitarists that play in the Hot Club of San Francisco. (I've had somewhere in the neighborhood of 8-9 in eleven years: some stay and some don't last a month.)

Some of these things listed are specific to our genre of Gypsy-swing, but overall I think the bluegrass guitarist can assimilate most of these suggestions with great success.

Questions? Disagreements? Send me emails at QuestionsForPazzo@hcsf.com

Rhythm Guitar Basics

1) The main function and responsibility is to mark the time, in a steady and swinging manner and to connect (like glue) the other members of the group. You are the catalyst of the band.

2) Ability to gauge tempo fluctuations and adjust accordingly. For example, if the tempo is speeding up and out of control, the rhythm guitar is expected to check the acceleration so that it does not get out of control. Or, if the tempo is slowing down and losing energy, the rhythm guitar is expected to maintain the energy and resist the pull of rhythmic lethargy. You want to be the solution, not the problem!

3) Ability to follow other instruments—rhythm section members as well as soloists—in the group. This includes paying attention to cues such as a soloist who is trying to hold a tempo (from going out of control in either direction, fast or slow) or a bassist who is playing in both 2/4 and 4/4. Know what is going on with the band. This means you have to track when the bass changes from 2/4 to 4/4, and/or if they are switching back and forth between the two. Playing with the same people over many months and/or years also should establish some familiarity and comfort as to each other's idiosyncrasies. One person might usually on the slow side, so you just know or remember that they need to be pushed. Or, another might be the eager exuberant person with energy who often gets out of control and needs to be held back a bit. You follow them to a point, then you must decide if they need to be checked (held back, but nicely) or goosed (turn up the heat under their backsides) to optimize their performance.

4) Ability to memorize chord changes and arrangements. Reading is fine; memorization allows you to be more musical.

5) Ability to transpose chord changes from one key to another, if needed.

6) Ability to think fast in an emergency (for example, if a member needs to drop out, breaks a string, gets lost, etc. and what to do to help the situation).

7) Ability to play all tempos: fast, slow (half time), ultra fast (double time), Latin, waltz, samba, tango, bossa nova, funk, etc. Specialization is great, but it couldn't hurt to fool around with other stuff, just in case!

8) Familiarity with Django Reinhardt recordings; familiarity with Freddy Green recordings (with Count Basie primarily); and familiarity with the differences between American rhythm guitar and Gypsy rhythm guitar.

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9) Familiarity with components of accompaniment, which requires you to follow the soloist (tempo, energy matching, intuition); remembering past history and building on same; getting in synch with soloist (Psych 101); making the soloist feel comfortable vs. stealing confidence; essentially, knowing the value of great accompaniment. A great accompanist knows that they may or may not get much of the spotlight, but they know that the success of the person(s) they are supporting depends totally upon them: if the audience goes nuts, you've done your job! (And you'll probably get lots of calls for gigs!)

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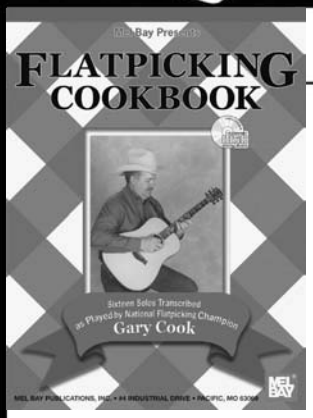

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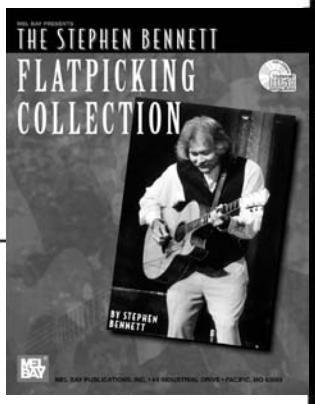

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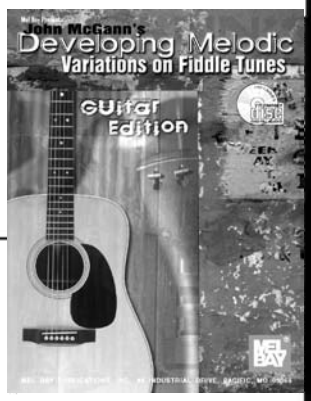

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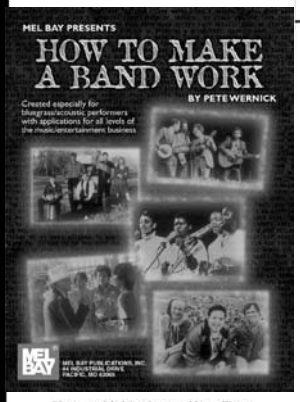

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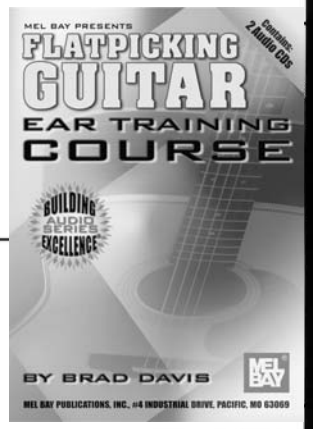

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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

High On A Mountain Top

As many of you know, studying and teaching bluegrass rhythm has been one of my main instructional pursuits over the past several years and so I'm "totally down" (as they say here in the big city) with the idea of an issue devoted to this topic.

While playing the other day and thinking about what to do for this column I found myself strumming "High On A Mountaintop," the haunting Ola Belle Reed song that Del McCoury began raising neck hairs with in bluegrass circles many years ago. Its slow and modal qualities make it an excellent rhythm vehicle (and especially suited for bluesier bass runs).

For reasons of space, we'll confine our exploration to the verse half of the song, first considering a basic but nuanced rhythm part and then moving on to a rhythm/lead hybrid which can be used as a simple solo.

One important component of bluegrass rhythm playing in general that is central to this arrangement is the modal G chord: fretting the 1st, 2nd and 6th strings on the third fret (with your pinky, ring and middle fingers respectively) while also muting the 5th string (by lightly toughing it with your middle or index fingers).

A second cool chord form used to good effect here is the C9th: coming from the modal G you simply move your middle finger over to the third fret of the 5th string and then place your index finger on the second fret of the 4th string. (Though less universally applicable than the modal G, the C9th works wonders when it works.)

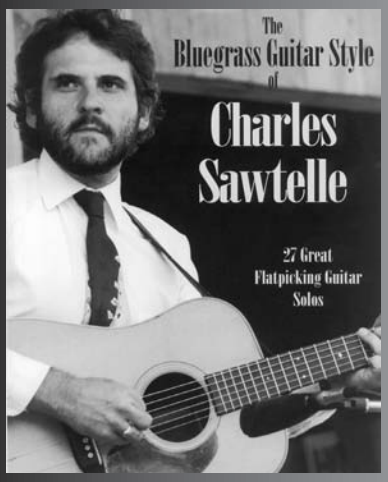
Our basic rhythm features a strum-based approach: we're not doing boom-chuckas. We're doing all strums (starting with chuck chuck-a ka-chucka), which we vary as the verse progresses and then punctuate at the end with a bass run. This approach—which Jimmy Martin helped pioneer—is the sound of modern bluegrass rhythm guitar. One subtlety which I employ is to favor the bass strings on the first strum of a measure followed by more treble-oriented strums (see the tab).

The rhythm/lead combo version makes ample use of rest strokes and double-stops (hitting two lead notes simultaneously, an essential flatpicking skill). As I've stressed in a number of prior columns, the essential thing here is to play your lead notes as lead notes and your strums as strums: keep them distinct. Note also that the transition from G to C chords involves two strums with open B strings and that your pinky remains on the third fret of the 1st string as you form your C chord.

Both versions end with mondo bass runs. The first is bluesier, its final open G note launched from the third fret of the D string (can you say Del?) rather than the more typical second fret. And note that the final G-run involves no pull-off from that second fret of the D string, a move I learned from Jimmy Martin's playing and which I use a lot lately.

Note: All of the above is much easier to comprehend by hearing rather than by reading, so getting the audio CD which accompanies this month's issue would be money well spent.

'Brooklyn Bluegrass Maestro' Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player. This fall he will be leading flatpicking workshops at Fur Peace Ranch in Ohio and at the Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend in Virginia. See www.flatpick.com/ostar



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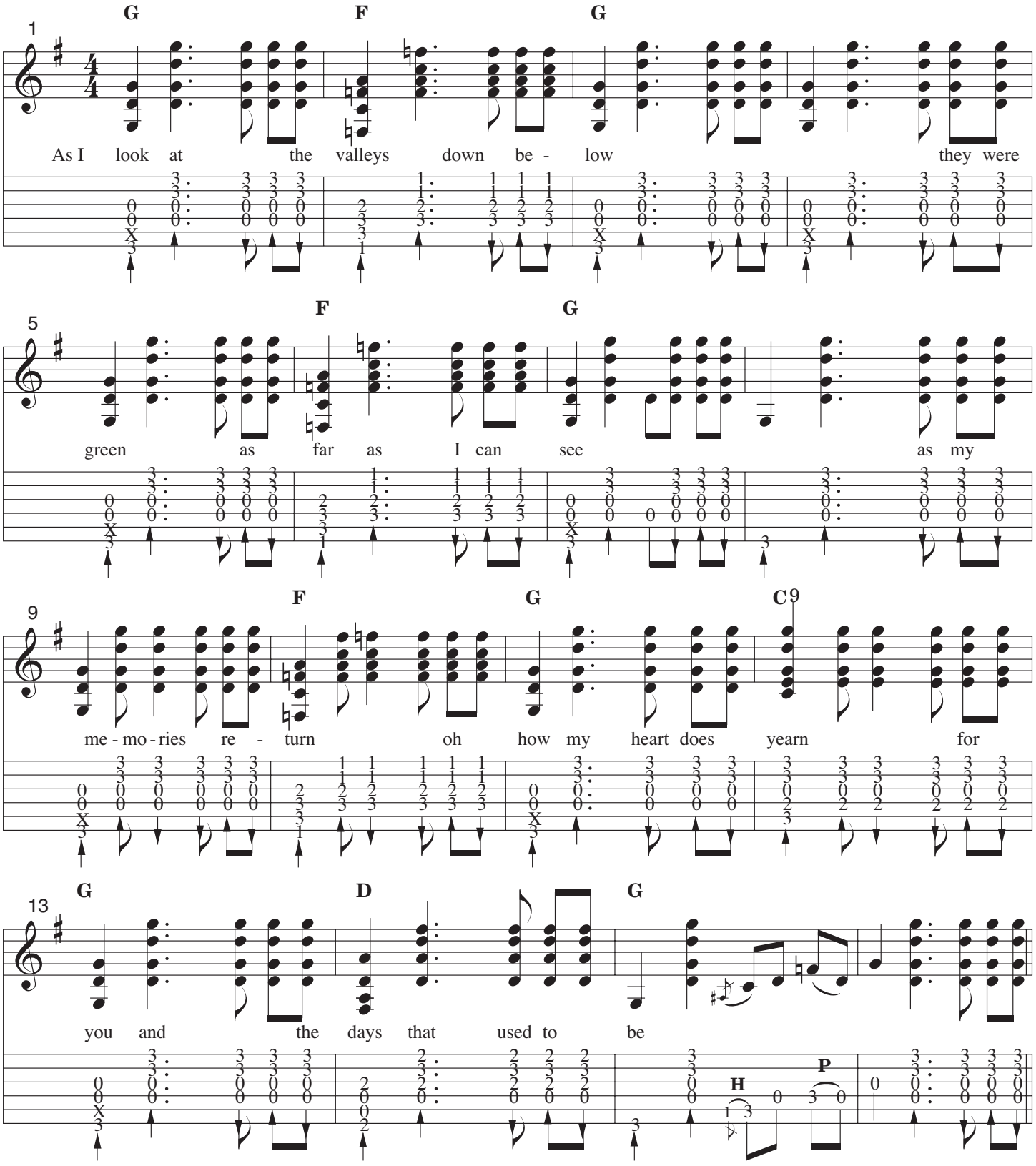
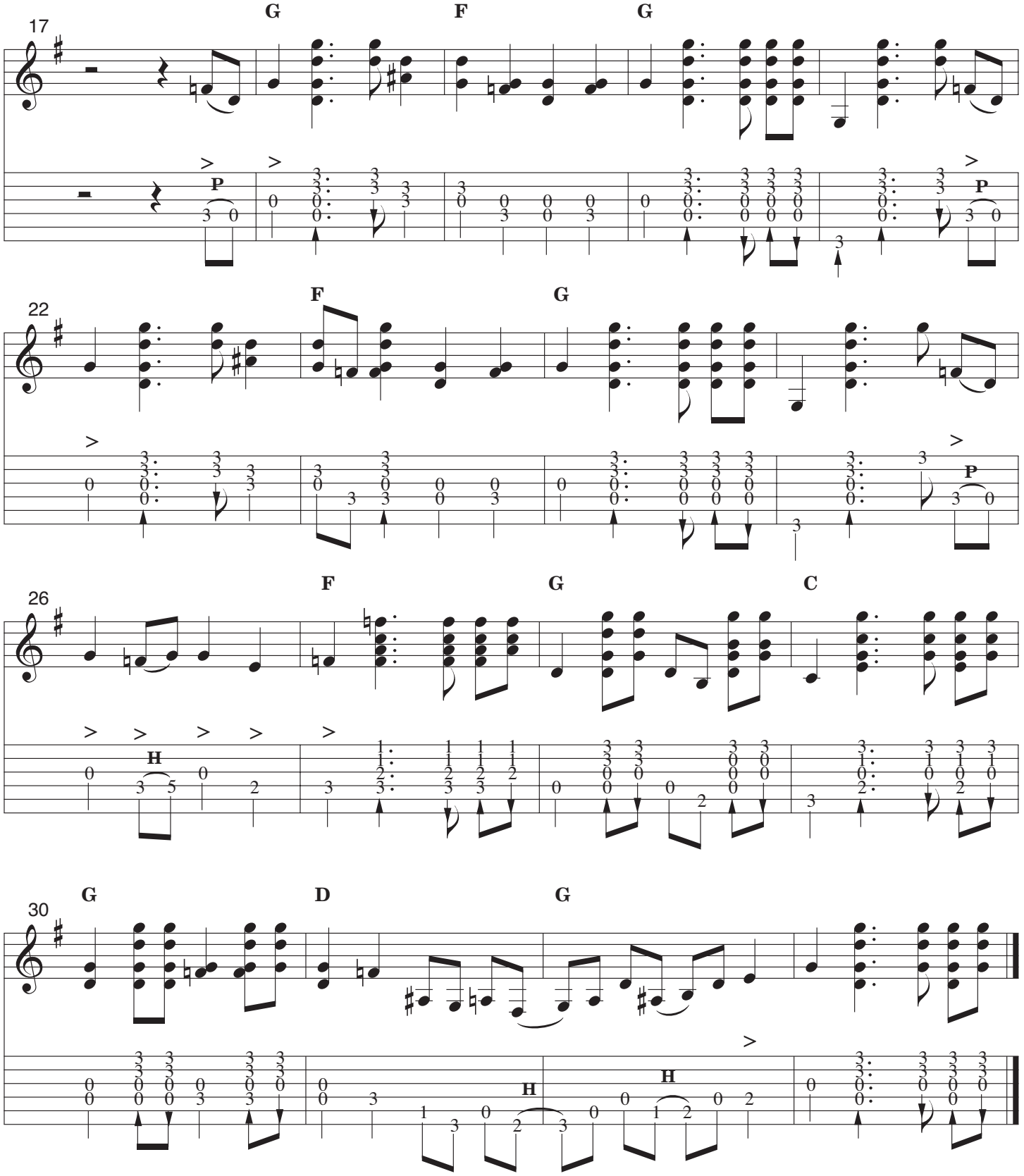

G F G
1
As I look at the valleys down be - low they were
F G
5
green as far as I can see as my
F G C9
9
me - mo - ries re - turn oh how my heart does yearn for
G D G
13
you and the days that used to be
H
P
= down strum
= up strum

High On A Mountain Top (con't)

Intervals & Ear Training

by Dix Bruce

In this column we'll take a look at several intervals and practice a bit of ear training.

An interval is the distance between two notes (D to D#, G to A, Bb to D, F to F, etc.). These different intervals, each with a unique name from minor second to octave and beyond, can be identified in melodies, scales, modes, and chords. Intervals are the building blocks of all things musical. It's important to teach yourself to recognize these intervals on the guitar by sight, feel, and sound. The ultimate goal is to train your ear to hear the different intervals in melodies and chords, to identify them, and to be able to transfer what you hear to your guitar.

Let's start by defining some terms. An interval of one half-step or one fret on the guitar (for example, from fret three and fret four), is called a "minor second." An interval of two half-steps, one whole step or two frets on the guitar (from fret three to fret five) is called a "major second." The chart below identifies all the intervals between minor second and octave. There are more (9ths, 11ths, 13ths, etc.), but we'll leave them for another time.

The first column on the left hand side of the chart names several intervals. The second column gives an example of the interval with two notes. The third column gives fret numbers on one string. Obviously you can play some of the larger intervals much easier on two or three strings than one. These are shown in the fourth column. Notes are shown with two numbers divided by a slash (/). The first number identifies the string, while the number after the slash tells you the fret number on the string. The fifth column shows the interval in 1/2 steps. One half-step on the guitar is the interval from one fret to the next. One whole step is the interval from, for example, fret one to fret three.

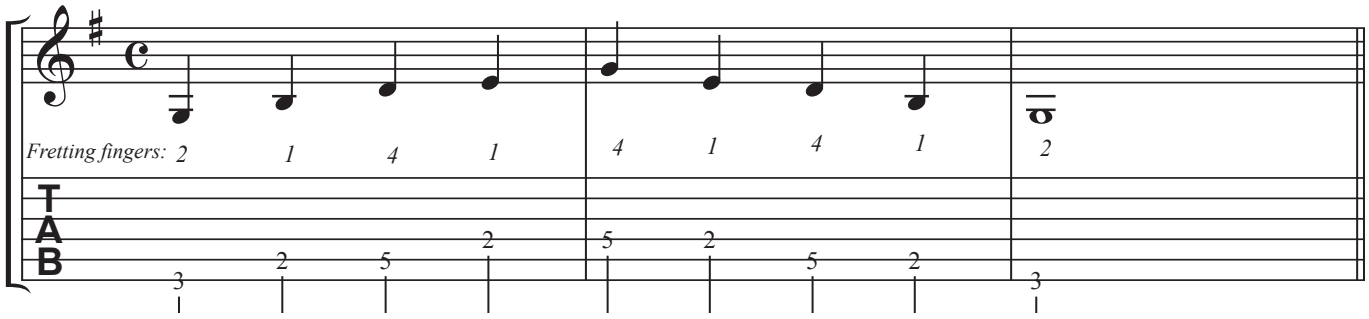
Let's look at a simple lick and break it down into its component intervals. Play the basic boogie-woogie riff below. I've written it in a closed position in the key of G so you can move it up and down the neck. All the shapes and intervals will be identical no matter where you play the lick, as long as you preserve the relative positions of the notes within it on the fingerboard.

The first interval between the first two notes (G and B) is a "major third." Fret both notes at the same time, as though you are making a partial G chord. That's what a major third looks like on strings 6 and 5. Play the notes consecutively, ascending and descending, and then together. That's the sound of a major third. Memorize the look, feel, and sound. As you play, sing the notes. (Unless you are a highly evolved Tuvan throat singer, you won't be able to sing both notes at the same time.) As you practice, say "major third" out loud every time you play and/or sing the interval. This will help you associate the sound with its name.

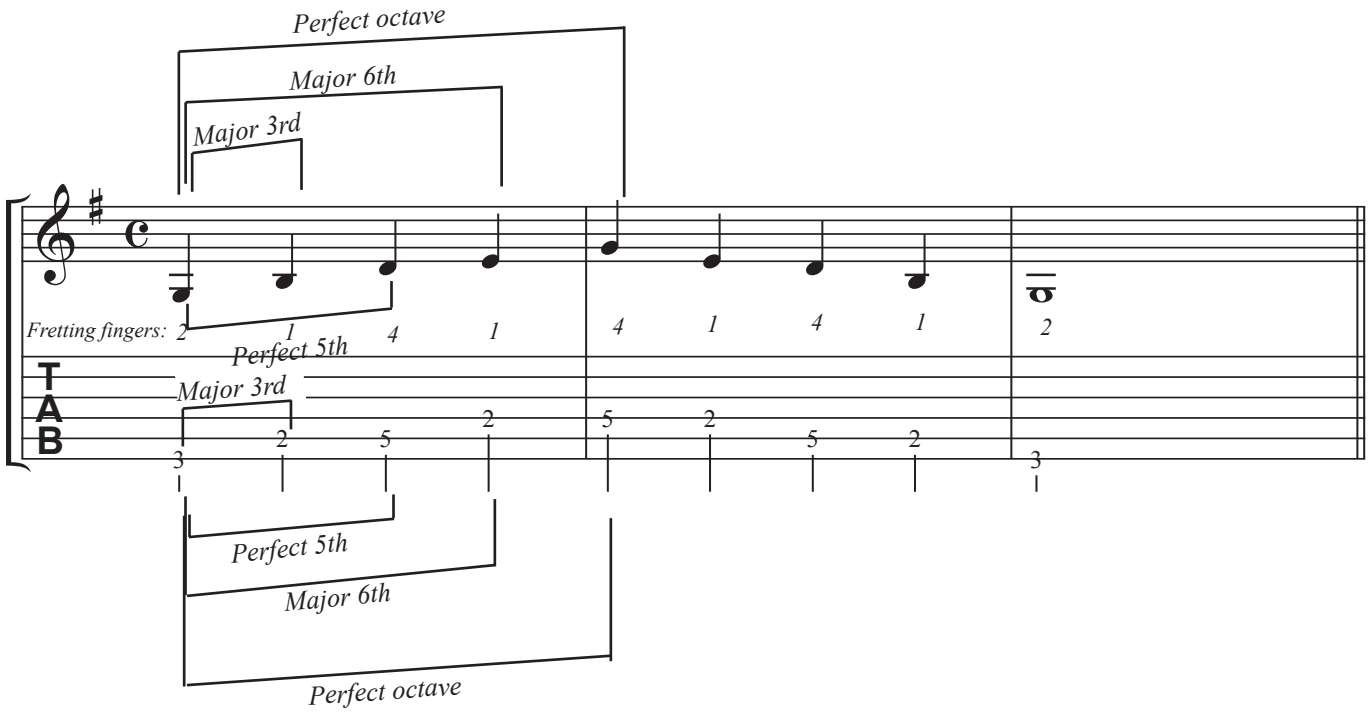
Interval Chart

Interval	*Note example*	*Fret example String 6*	*Fret example One or two Strings: (string/fret)*	*1/2 steps, whole steps in interval*
Minor 2nd	G to G#	3 to 4	6/3 to 6/4	1 half step
Major 2nd	G to A	3 to 5	6/3 to 6/5	2 half steps/1whole step
Minor 3rd	G to Bb	3 to 6	6/3 to 5/1	1-1/2 steps
Major 3rd	G to B	3 to 7	6/3 to 5/2	2 whole steps
Perfect 4th	G to C	3 to 8	6/3 to 5/3	2-1/2 steps
Augmented 4th	G to C#	3 to 9	6/3 to 5/4	3 whole steps
Perfect 5th	G to D	3 to 10	6/3 to 5/5	3-1/2 steps
Minor 6th	G to Eb	3 to 11	6/3 to 4/1	4 whole steps
Major 6th	G to E	3 to 12	6/3 to 4/2	4-1/2 steps
Minor 7th	G to F	3 to 13	6/3 to 4/3	5 whole steps
Major 7th	G to F#	3 to 14	6/3 to 4/4	5-1/2 steps
Octave	G to G	3 to 15	6/3 to 4/5	6 whole steps

Boogie Woogie Lick #1



Boogie Woogie Lick Detailed



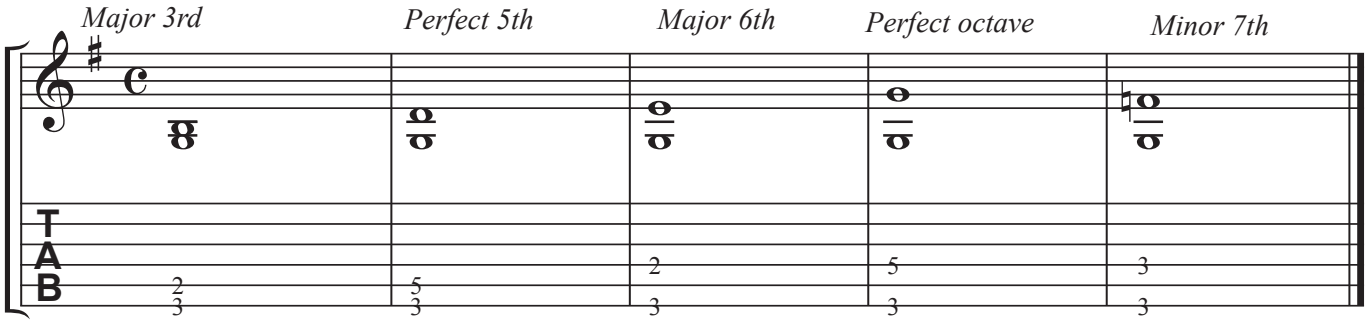
Move this interval up and down the fingerboard and if you preserve the shape, you'll have a major third. Take time to play the interval in the context of the boogie riff and sing along with it as you do. This will also help you internalize the major third and the other intervals we'll study below. If you play this interval descending, higher note first, lower second, you'll get the melody that accompanies the first "swing low" lyrics from the song "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot." If you're ever trying to sing or play a descending major third, think of "swing low."

You can move the major third shape across the fingerboard to different sets of strings, but it will only work up to a point. You'll get a major third with this shape on strings 5 & 4, 4 & 3, and strings 2 & 1. To play a major third on strings 3 & 2, you'll have to fret both strings in the third fret. That's because the guitar is tuned in fourths, except for the interval between strings 3 & 2, which is a third. So, move this "major third" shape up and down and across the fingerboard. The examples above shows this and the other intervals detailed.

The second interval we'll look at is between the first and third notes, G and D. This interval is a "perfect fifth." Play the notes consecutively, ascending and descending, and then together, as you did with the major third above. Memorize the look, feel, and sound of it. Be sure to play the interval in the context of the boogie riff and sing along with it as you do. Each time you sing and/or play it as part of the boogie riff, say "perfect fifth." As with the major third, you can move this interval up and down the fingerboard. You can also move it across the fingerboard to strings 5 & 4, 4 & 3, and strings 2 & 1. Strings 3 & 2 two once again throw a monkey wrench into the works. To play a perfect fifth here, the first note has to be three frets lower than the second. Does this cause a problem for us? No! We are guitar players! We laugh in the face of adversity. Ha ha ha! You can hear a descending perfect fifth in the first three notes of "The Star Spangled Banner": "oh-oh say." If you ignore the second "oh," the interval from the first "oh" to "say" is a perfect fifth.

The next interval, from the first to the fourth note, G to E, is a "major sixth." This shape encompasses three strings. You can easily move a major sixth position up and down the fingerboard but it will be more problematic to move it across the fingerboard to other sets of strings. It'll work fine on strings 5 & 3. For strings 4 & 2, stay in the same fret. Try finding the shape for strings 3 & 1 on your own. (E-mail me

Interval Positions



at dix@musixnow.com for the answer if you can't figure it out.) Practice the major sixth as you did in the other examples memorizing the sound at different areas of the fingerboard. If you play an ascending major sixth interval you'll get the melody that accompanies the first "My wild" lyrics from the song "My Wild Irish Rose."

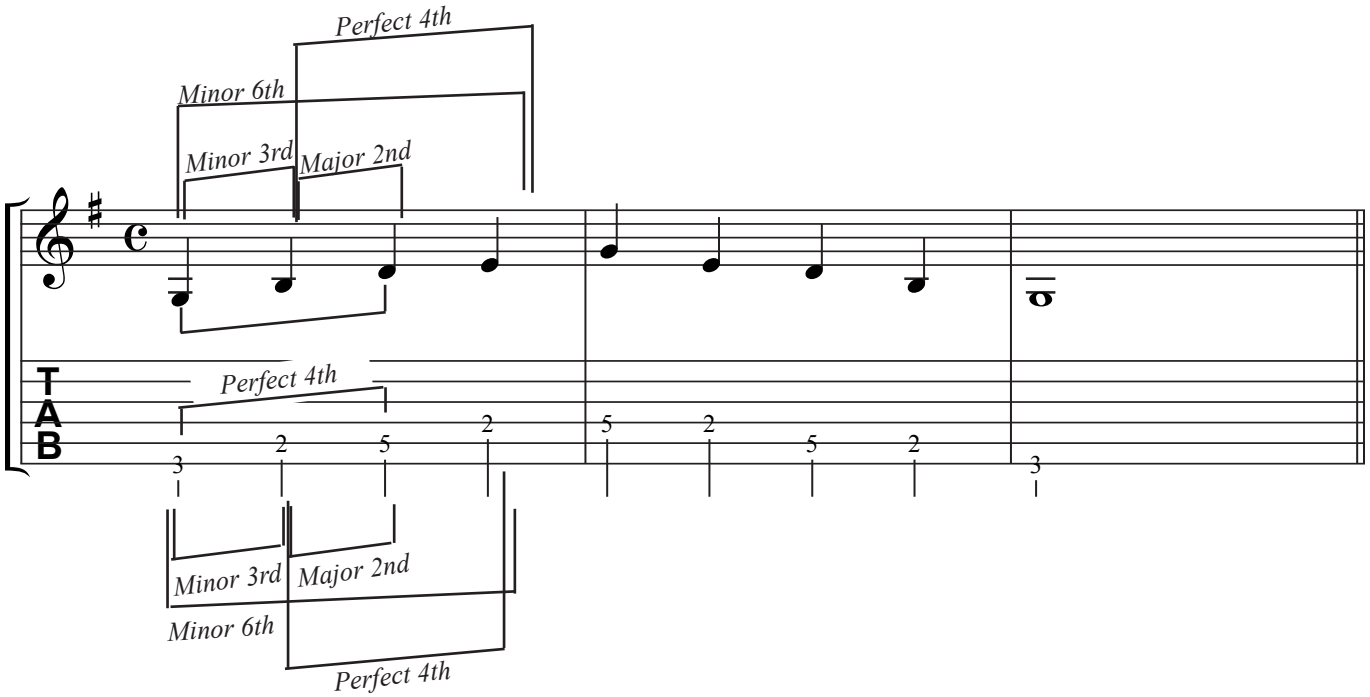
The last interval we'll pull out of the boogie riff is from the first to the fifth note, from the first G to the second G. You're probably already familiar with this interval, the "octave." Work with it as you did the other intervals above. Like the interval of the major sixth, the octave will span three strings and can be easily moved up and down the fingerboard. In addition to strings 6 & 4, this shape will work on strings 5 & 3. For string sets 4 & 2 and 3 & 1, the first note has to be three frets lower than the second. See the interval positions example below. When you play an ascending octave, you'll recognize the melody to the first "Somewhere" from the song "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

There are other intervals in the boogie riff that we can study and memorize and I'll mention some of them here in passing and assume that you'll tackle them on your own. As you may have noticed, we attach different prefixes like "major," "minor," "perfect," "augmented," and so on to intervals. Without getting too much into the theory of what each one means, generally speaking, the term "minor" before an interval lowers it one half step compared to the major version of the same interval. The term "augmented" raises it one half step compared to the major version. Now back to the boogie riff.

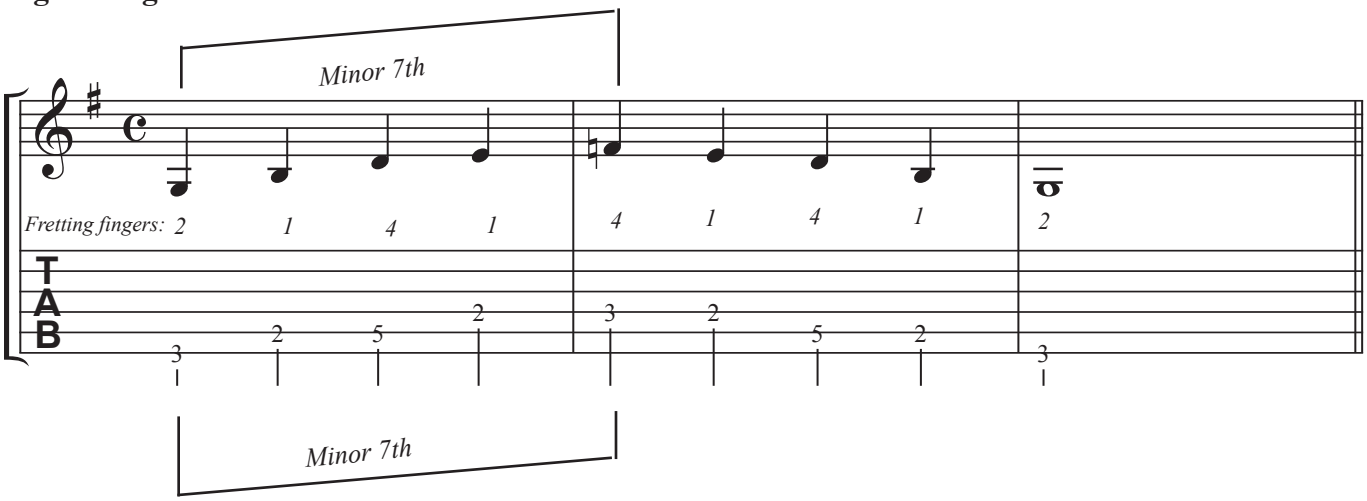
The interval from the second note to the third note, B to D, is a "minor third." B to E is a "perfect fourth." B to G is a "minor sixth." Next we can look at the intervals from third note D up and down. For example, D down to G is still a "perfect fifth." D down to B is a "minor third." D up to E is a "major second." D up to G is a "perfect fourth." You can analyze any melodic passage in this way and identify all the intervals. See below.

The basic boogie riff is slightly modified in the example below. Instead of the fifth note G, I've substituted an F natural, to give a strong seventh sound to the riff. Changing this one note gives us several new intervals. From the first note to the fifth note, G to F, is the interval of a "minor seventh."

Internal Intervals



Boogie Woogie with Minor 7th



The minor seventh will span three strings and both the upper and lower notes will be in the same fret, two strings away. Here's what the minor seventh position looks like in tablature (see above).

All the other intervals that involve this fifth note F natural are also changed, since the F natural is a whole step lower than the G we had in the previous boogie example. The interval from the second note B to the fifth note F is an "augmented fourth." From D to F is a "minor third." From E to F is a "minor second."

Be sure to move the minor seventh interval up and down and across the fingerboard. The minor seventh pattern above works on strings 5 & 3. For strings 4 & 2 and 3 & 1, the first note needs to be one fret lower than the second.

On the accompanying audio CD cuts to this column, you'll find two exercises for identifying the intervals we've just discussed. Here's the format: I'll play a two-note interval ascending, descending, or together, you'll have a few seconds to identify it, then I'll give you the answer. You'll know immediately which intervals are difficult for you to identify and which ones need work. Each exercise deals only with three different intervals so you'll have a one-in-three chance of identifying each interval correctly. If you discover, for example, that the major sixth interval is hard for you to identify, practice playing it on the guitar, singing it, and identifying. The whole point of the exercises is to get you hearing these intervals. If they give you trouble, work on them.

Because of space limitations on the audio CD, we had to cut a couple of audio examples where I demonstrate how the intervals sound on the guitar and how they fit into the basic boogie woogie riff. If you'd like to hear them, log onto my website (www.musixnow.com), go to the "Downloads" section, and click "Flatpicking Guitar." Once there you can listen to or download MP3 files of the audio examples.

I first heard of ear training about twenty years ago. The best musicians I knew recommended that I investigate ear training to improve my ability to "hear" music, play it on the guitar, and to develop my musical literacy. I studied with Elvo D'Amante, the best teacher I ever had and someone I have mentioned in past columns. I recently assisted Professor D'Amante in preparing his massive three-volume, eleven-CD ear training method titled (as you might guess) *Ear Training*. (I recorded the eleven CDs of exercises that accompany his texts.)

In this column we've taken the first elementary steps in the study of intervallic relationships and identification. And, as with most subjects we approach in a column of this length, we've only scratched the surface. If you are interested in studying ear training further, I highly recommend Prof. Elvo D'Amante's *Ear Training*. Info and audio clips are available on my website. Volume I teaches scales, modes and their component parts called tetrachords. Volume II teaches intervals. Volume III teaches chords, and how to sing, play, and identify everything from simple triads to the most complex chords by ear.

Ear Training is the course I took from Prof. D'Amante almost twenty years ago. His exercises are wonderful at helping the student hear scales, intervals, and chords and to learn to identify them. I based the interval exercises on the FGM audio on Elvo's exercises. In both cases we play a series of intervals and drill you on identifying them. Of course Elvo's exercises are much more extensive and bring you into the study more gradually. Mine are kind of a quick hit to give you an idea of how to work on hearing intervals. Once again, the goal is to train your ear to hear intervals in melodies and chords, a great skill for any musician to have.

Brothers at Heart *by Dix Bruce & Jim Nunally is available online from http://www.musixnow.com. You can preview soundclips from several of the songs. Available through Musix, PO Box 231005, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523.*

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Finding the Melody in Alternate Chord Positions

In nearly every case, the melody of a tune or song is found either in part or in its entirety through the selection of chords and the chord position played. Knowledge of chords and their positions is therefore invaluable in finding the "best" way of playing a melody.

Using the chord position benefits the guitarist as well, as it provides a full, rich sound potential through the use of double stops (i.e., playing two strings at once instead of a single string line), crosspicking, and melodic invention working within the chord construct.

The most important thing to remember is that you are not just playing a crosspick roll or a strum like you do when playing rhythm. Instead, you think in terms of the chord position, but play the notes of the chord in the order that is appropriate for the melody.

This might seem to be a bit daunting at first, but with some thought and practice it becomes a natural way to approach the fingerboard. As you gain experience with this type of chordal thinking, you begin to visualize chord substitutions and possible variations on the melody, as well as "seeing" the way that the scale forms relate to the chord forms.

Many fiddle tune melodies lend themselves to the approach. "Fisher's Hornpipe" and "Sailor's Hornpipe" (both presented below) are two that come immediately to mind.

Exercise 1 shows an example of this type of chordal thinking using the first position F chord fingering. For this example we are playing in the key of G, so we've moved the fingering up to third position. Remember, the position is the fret that the index finger falls upon, so third position means that the index finger is on the third fret. Hold the index finger down while playing the entire exercise.

Move this example up one fret and play in Ab, up to fifth position for A and so on. Experiment with other lines and melodies using this concept.

Exercise 2 is a demonstration of this concept using the simple melody from the A section of "Fisher's Hornpipe." Notice that to play the melody properly, you must hold the chord position and pick the appropriate melody notes with the right hand. Hold the D chord in second position using the indicated fingering.

About the Tune

"Sailor's Hornpipe" is a well-known tune, featured on cartoons and kids' TV programs for years. It is also a fun and interesting fiddle tune to play. A nice version of "Sailor's" can be found in an old Bill Monroe recording with the great chromatic banjo master Bill Keith picking out the melody.

Notice the slide to shift into third position in the first measure which allows you to play the D-C run using the C on the fifth fret G string.

This puts you in the right position to easily play the next passage, out of the third position G chord as in exercise 1.

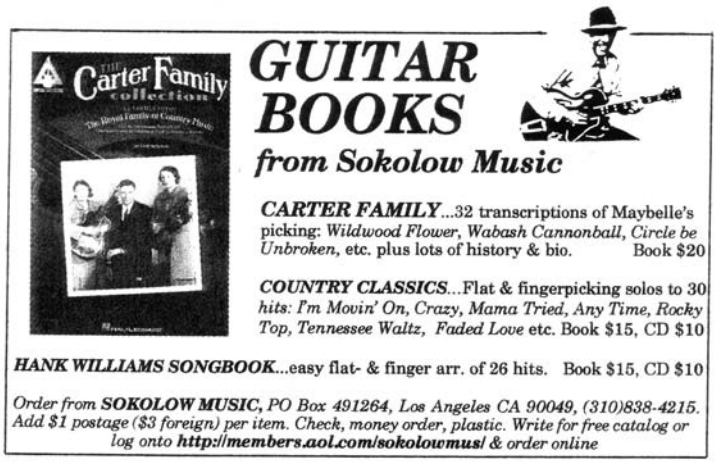
As you play through new tunes and create your own, stay on the lookout for places where you can hold the chord position and still play the melody. This will give your playing a richer, fuller sound, adding to the number of "good tones" in the music world.

Hope to see you soon at one of our shows when you are in the Rockies.

Have fun, and keep on pickin'!

About the Author:

Mike lives in Woodland Park, Colorado, where he plays bluegrass and jazz, writes, teaches, and studies music. Watch for his band, the Bertye Maddux Band, coming soon to a festival near you. You can visit his web site at www.madduxband.com. The band schedule, sound bytes, photos, and email addresses are found there. Drop him a line with questions or comments via email, or c/o this magazine.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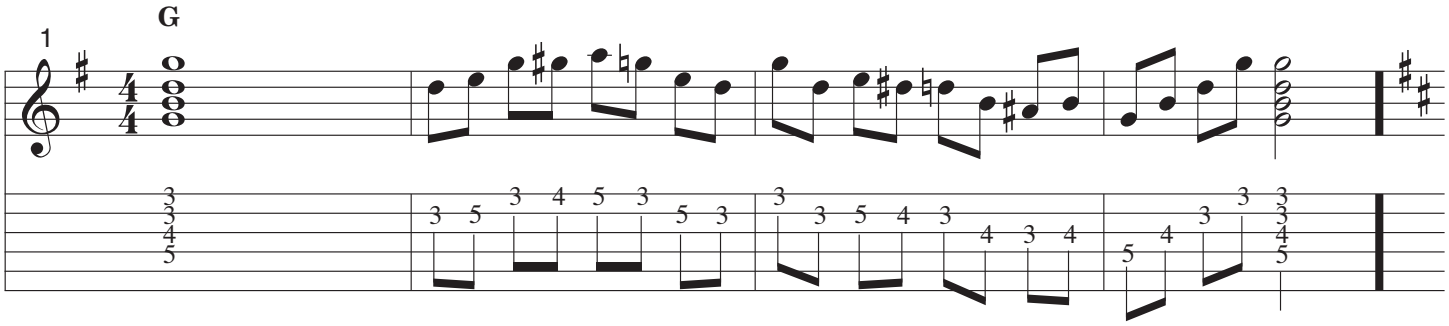
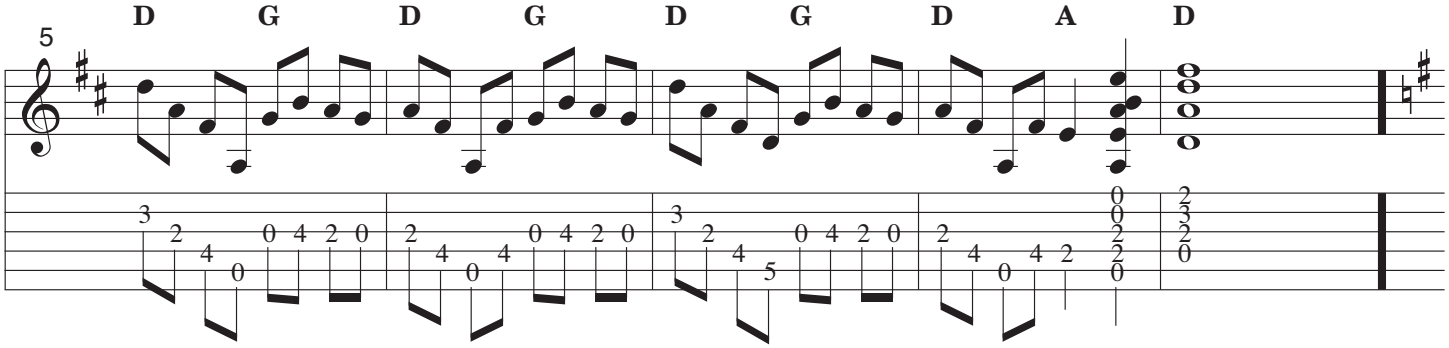
Audio CD
Tracks 31-33

Maddux Exercises

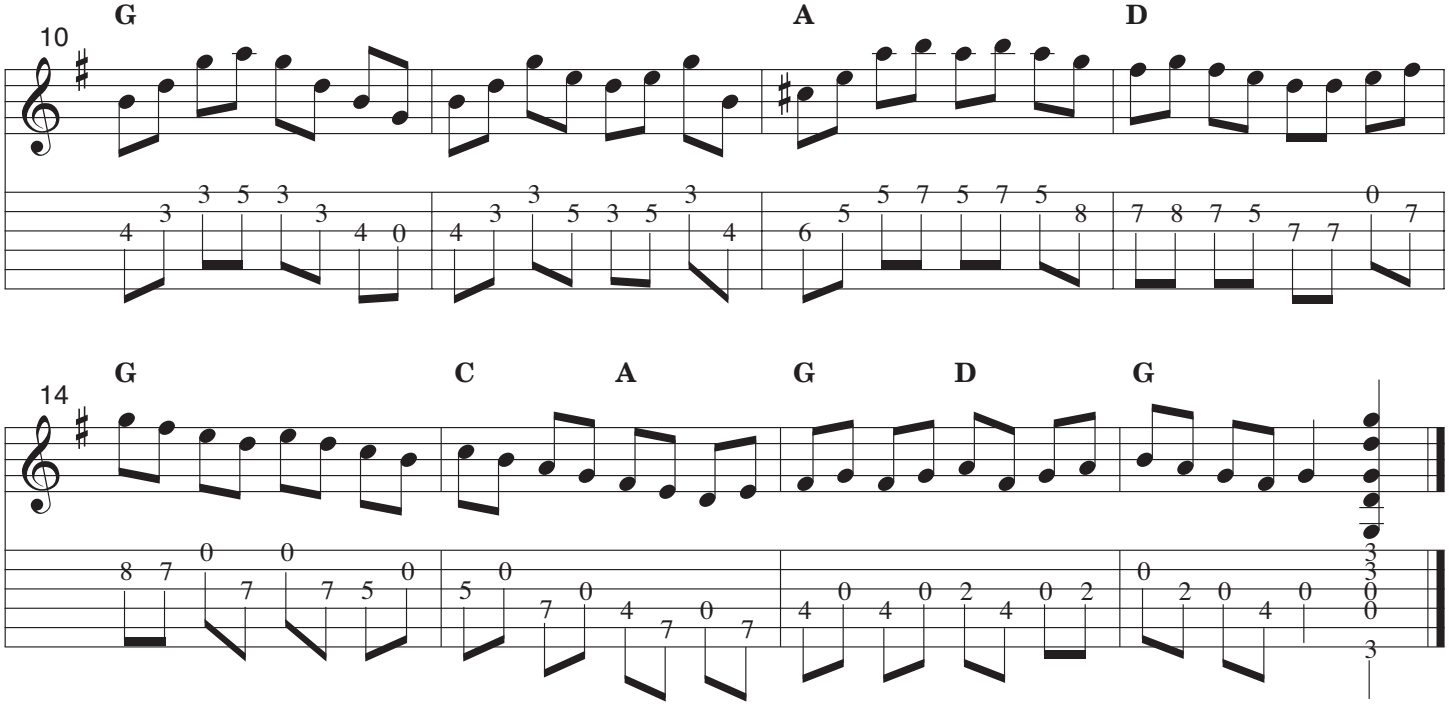
Exercise 1: Moveable Melodic Invention



Exercise 2: Excerpt from Fisher's Hornpipe



Exercise 3: Closed Position Melody and Floaties



Audio CD
Tracks 34-36

Sailor's Hornpipe

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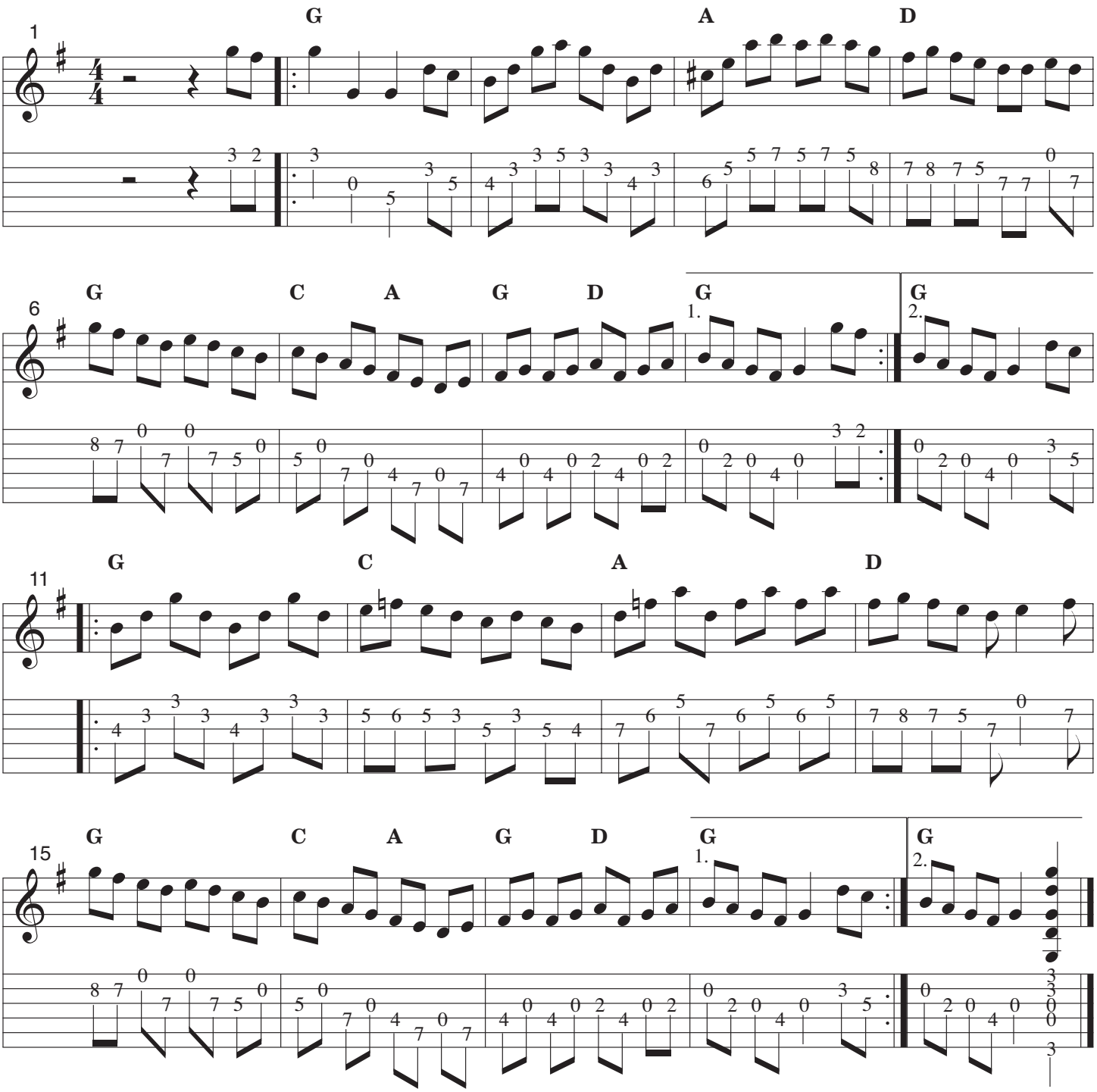

Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

Satan's Choir

It's been a while since a bluegrass tune appeared in this column, so the song this time around aims to change that. "Satan's Choir" was recorded by Seldom Scene back in 1988 on their *A Change of Scenery* album. It's a great album with a lot of good flatpicking scattered throughout, and if it hasn't found a home in your collection already, it should, particularly if you've not heard "Satan's Choir" before and you're wondering what the melody sounds like. That's because the tab included here is that of a break (or breaks) and like a lot of bluegrass breaks, it follows the chord progression but not the melody. Also, purchasing the CD will help you get a handle on the lyrics, which by no means proclaim that the idea of Satan having a choir is a good one. (On the contrary, the last line of the chorus is: "I don't want to sing in Satan's choir.")

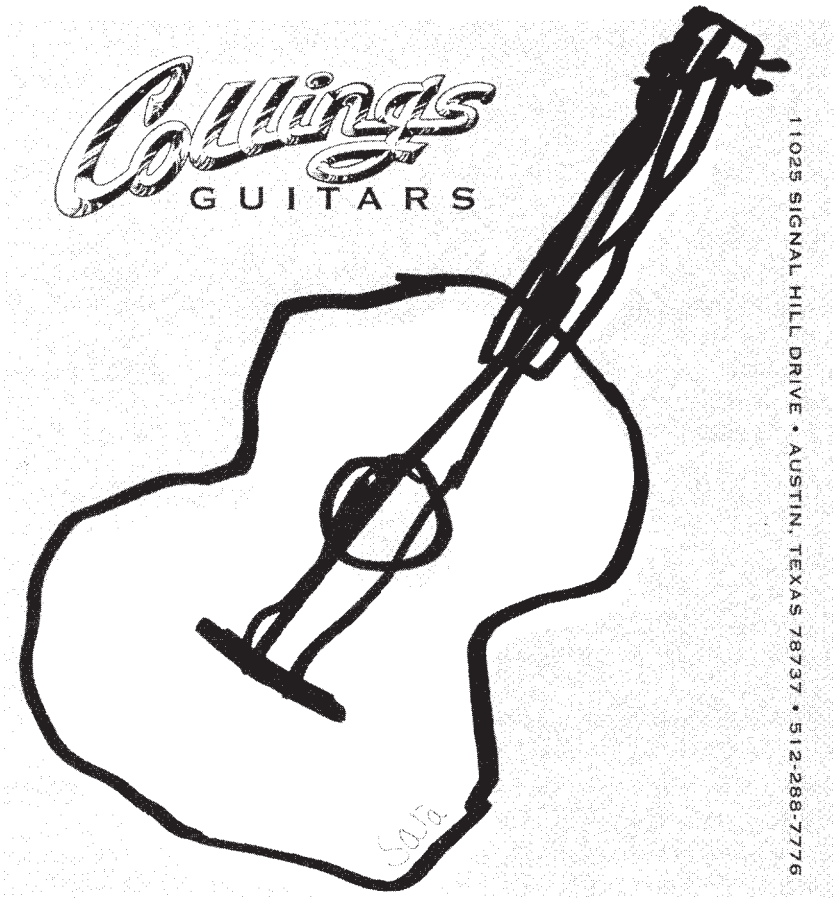
The first eight bars of the tab (nine including the pickup notes) are of the first half of the intro as heard on the recording. The section is a little tricky at times, such as in measure 4, which contains two triplets played over a C chord. Now, although this is a very fine way to kick the song off, it follows the chord progression of the first half of the verse. By the way, unless you have the luxury of being a member of a band with Dobro, mandolin, and banjo players in it (in other words, a group like the Seldom Scene), you may be called upon to play the complete intro.

Hence, the following measures—beginning in measure 10 and continuing through measure 17—consist of a simile of Ben Eldridge's banjo playing. In fact, the notes Ben chose to play in this section wound up laying so well on the guitar neck, that there was really no need to deviate from his choices. Well, except for measures 13 and 14, where Ben chose to play roll patterns over a C chord on the recording to provide contrast, and measure 17, which consists of a guitar tag lick rather than a banjo tag lick. As for measures 13 and 14, the tab provides an example of occasional flatpicker thinking: rather than lay in the weeds, the choice here was to continue on in the same vein as in the preceding measures by hooking together a couple of runs.

Beginning with measure 18, the remaining measures of the tab follow the chord progression of the chorus. Later on in the recording, Mike Auldridge takes a break based on this progression, but in the absence of a Dobro player, you may also be called upon to play such a break yourself. If I've conjured correctly, this section is hopefully in keeping with the flatpick stylings of the intro and of the moods and textures of the remainder of the song.

Suggested left-hand fingerings are shown above the staff for critical and potentially questionable measures, such as measures 10 through 13, measure 15, measures 26 and 27, and measure 32.

As always, if you have any suggestions for songs to appear in this column, email me at lewalt@icehouse.net, and please pay us a visit at www.lewalt.com.



Audio CD
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Satan's Choir

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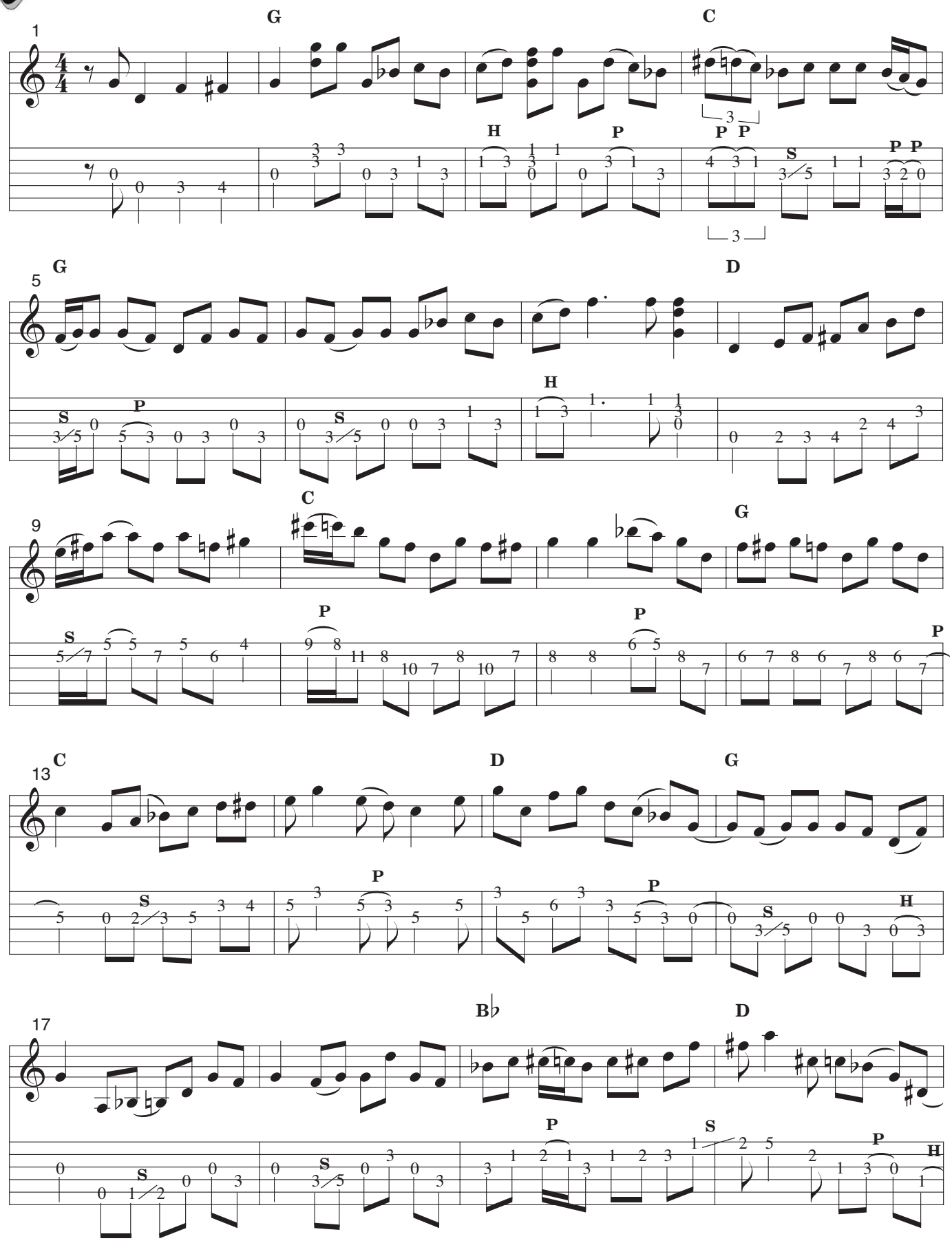
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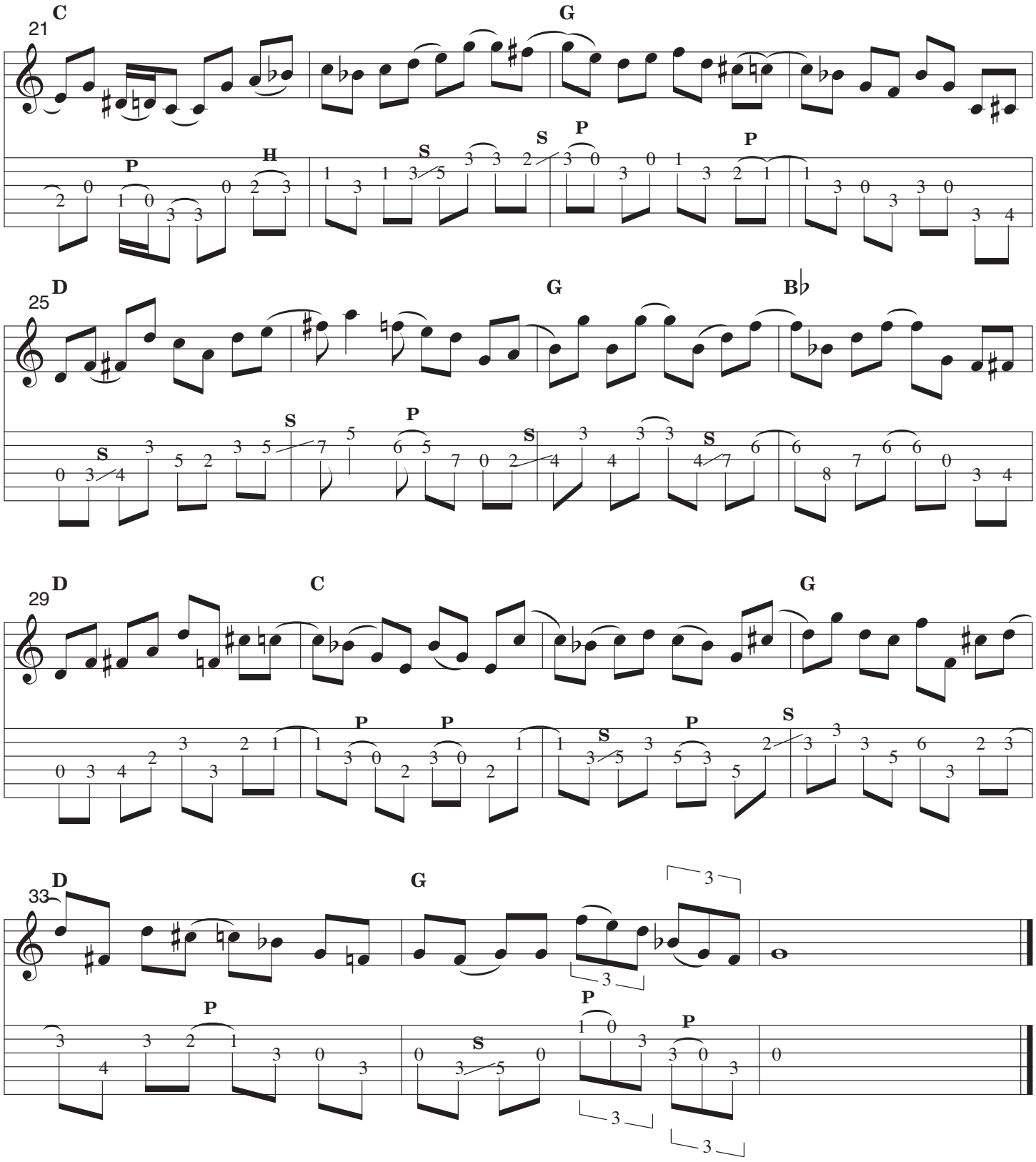
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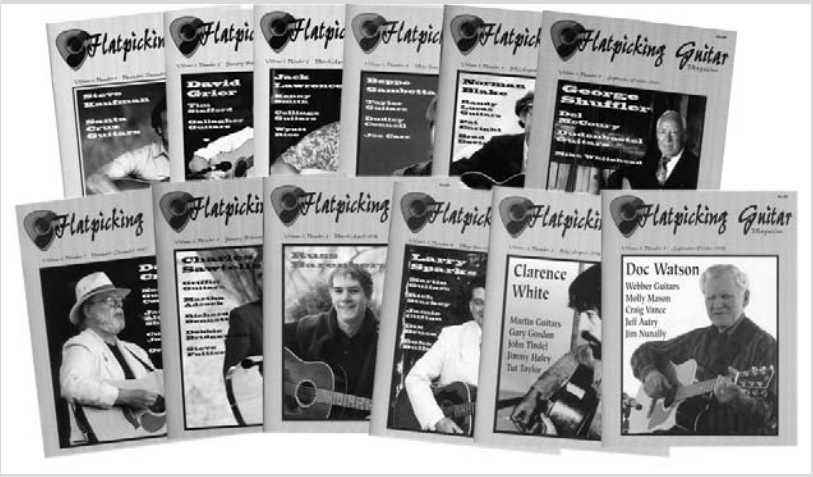
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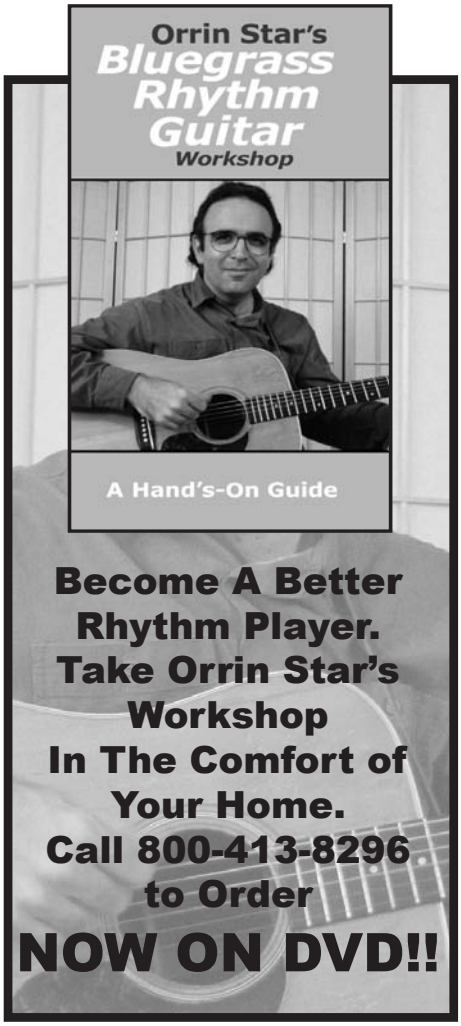

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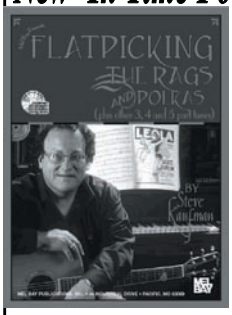

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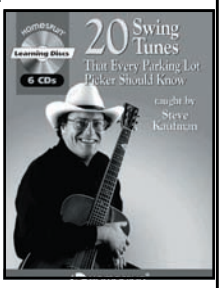

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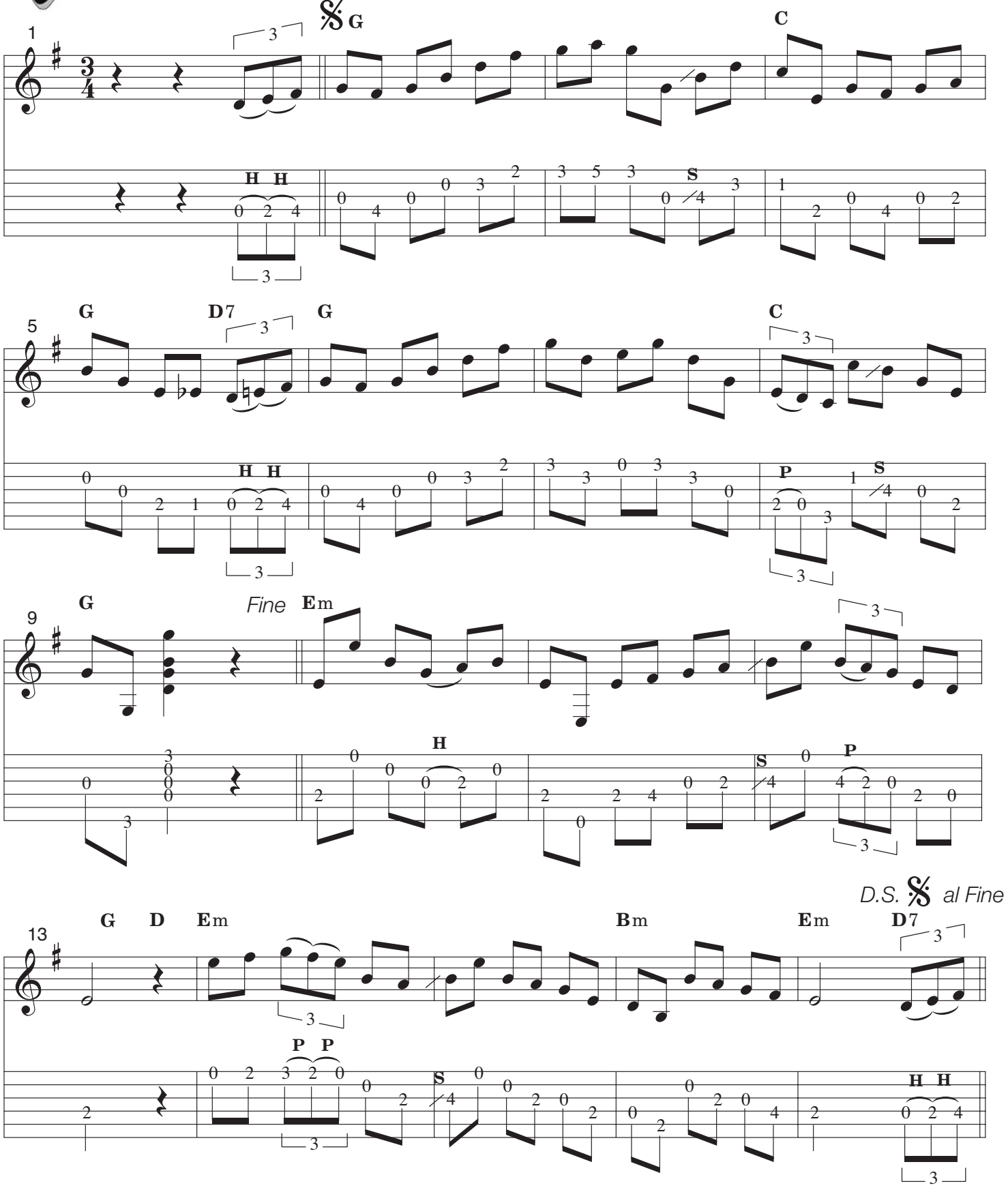
Audio CD
Track 40

Winfield Waltz

Written by Bill Bay

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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES
by Adam Granger

RHYTHM GUITAR

So it's come to this: a whole issue of *Flatpicking Guitar* magazine dedicated to bluegrass rhythm guitar! For years, it's been like pulling teeth to get flatpick students to pay attention to their rhythm guitar playing, and as a result, for years we've had an odd situation wherein there have been more good lead players than good rhythm players. In those dark days, the only place I *didn't* run into attitude problems among students (as in, "Yeah, yeah, I've got the boom-chick thing down. Now, about that Tony Rice break. . .") was when I would teach rhythm guitar to accompanists at fiddle camps.

Then, about four years ago, all of the best pickers in the business starting coming out with quotes to the effect that they like playing rhythm as much as lead and that rhythm is more important than lead, and we have now progressed to the point that I taught rhythm guitar to 208 flatpickers at Steve Kaufman's 2003 Kamp without so much as a whimper of protest from anyone. Bravo! We've come a long way, baby. . .

Whether you're talking bluegrass rhythm, old time backup or fiddle tune accompaniment, it's going to be based on a boom (bass note) and a chick (strum) and other points in between (upstrums, runs and interim notes). As I'm sure other columnists in this issue of *FGM* will be telling you, bluegrass rhythm guitar often involves leaving out a bass note here and putting in an upstrum there, thereby creating rhythms which syncopate nicely against the steady drive of a full bluegrass band. I'm assuming that players such as Jimmy Martin and Larry Sparks will be dissected (well, not actually *them*, of course, but their musical styles). Presumably, runs, and different ways of making them, will be covered also.

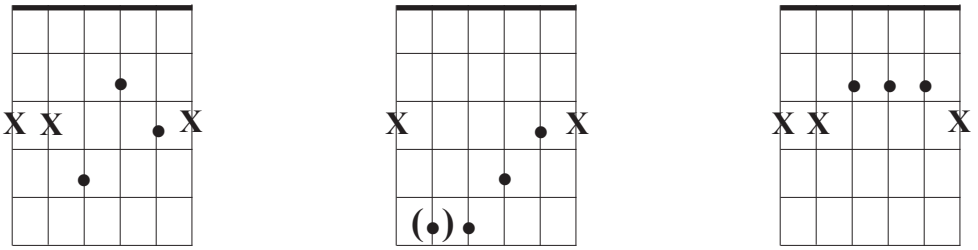
READING *EASYTAB*

Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

I, then, am going to limit my column here to one little rhythm niche that I think will be of interest and of use to you. Our project car here is *Soldier's Joy,* for which I've written a progression which uses only three different chords shapes, each consisting of a picked bass note—usually the root—and a strummed two-note chord. Of course, a chord needs three notes to be a chord, but the bass note which precedes the two strummed strings makes the third note. We play these chords in "sock guitar" style, *i.e.*, we'll damp each chord by lifting our fingers off the strings slightly. Here are the three shapes we'll use to do this:



PLEASE NOTE THAT NO UNFRETTED STRINGS ARE TO BE SOUNDED! This is achieved simply by not playing the bass strings and by muting the high E string with the pad of whatever finger is fretting the B string (that way, you can still make a big old arc with your right hand to give your strum good quality and verve). You'll move these three positions to the proper places on the neck to make your progression work right. Note that these are not fancy chords—they're all either straight-ahead D's, G's or A's. Note also that you're playing very traditional root and root-five bass notes. These ain't no jazzy uptown commie pinko urban walking-bass hoity-toity sissy chords. Nossir, *tonally*, this is very conventional backup guitar. What distinguishes this style is the spareness of the chords and the fact that they can be socked. Your chords, in this style, will take on a mandolinish quality. (No, "mandolinish" isn't in my dictionaly, but it should be. I use the word almost every day. I might, for example, say to my wife, "Well, *that* was a very mandolinish thing to say")

Okay, any questions? Yes, you in the back with your eyeballs spinning opposite directions:

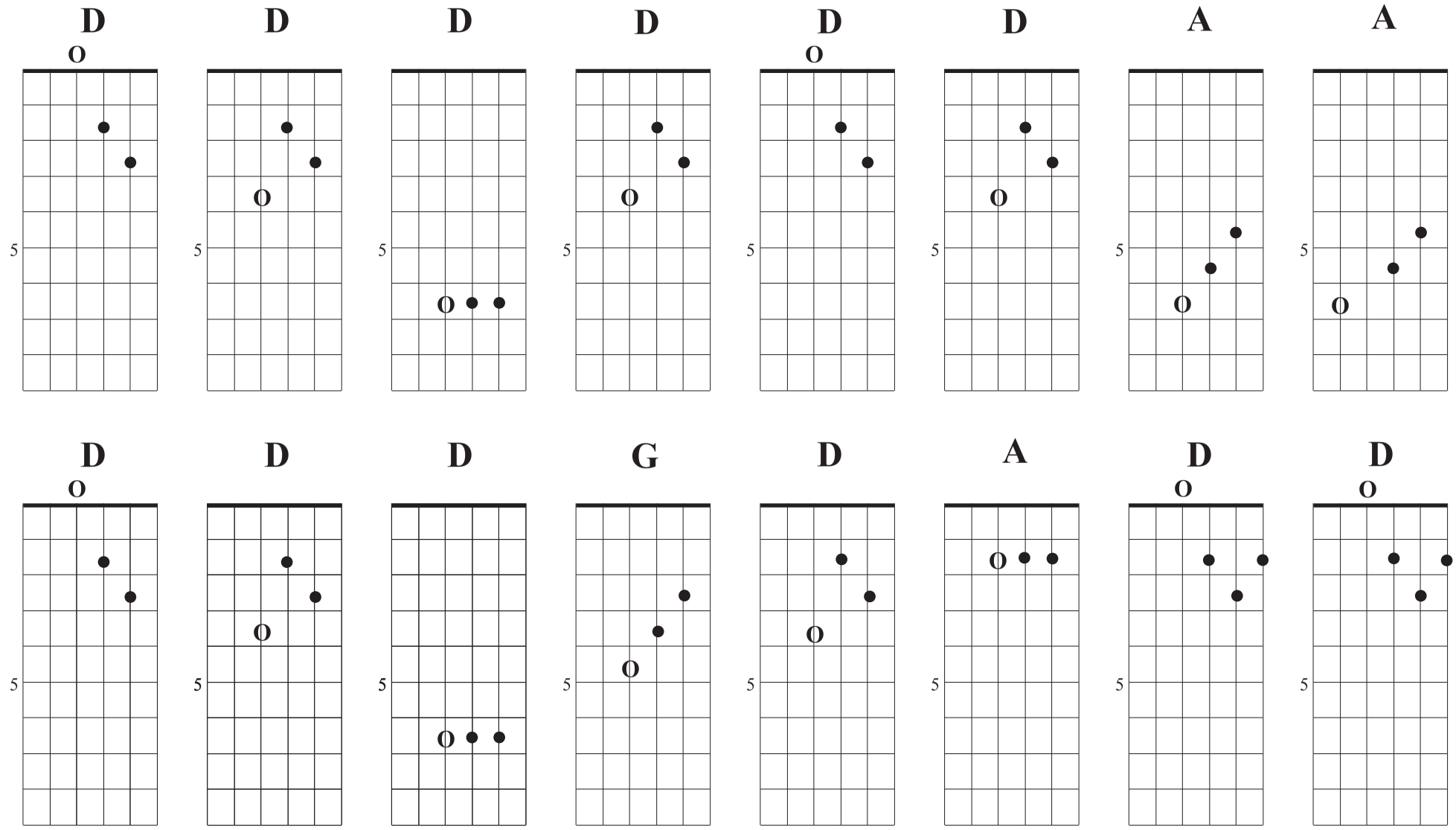
"So, Adam, if I take the trouble to learn this, where would I use it?"

Well, anywhere you needed the beat and backbeat well-defined: an echoey hall; an ensemble with a bad groove or one with essentially bad rhythm or drive; a noisy setting; or, a situation where you wanted to stay way out of the way, chordally speaking. The great thing about this backup is the fact that it's so danged conventional tonally. You can really sock the chords and not get any grief about playing jazz chords or Texas backup or some such. You're just playing straight-ahead major triads.

The *FGM* CD will, of course, give you an excellent idea of what this all sounds like. All right, you rhythmmeisters, have at it!

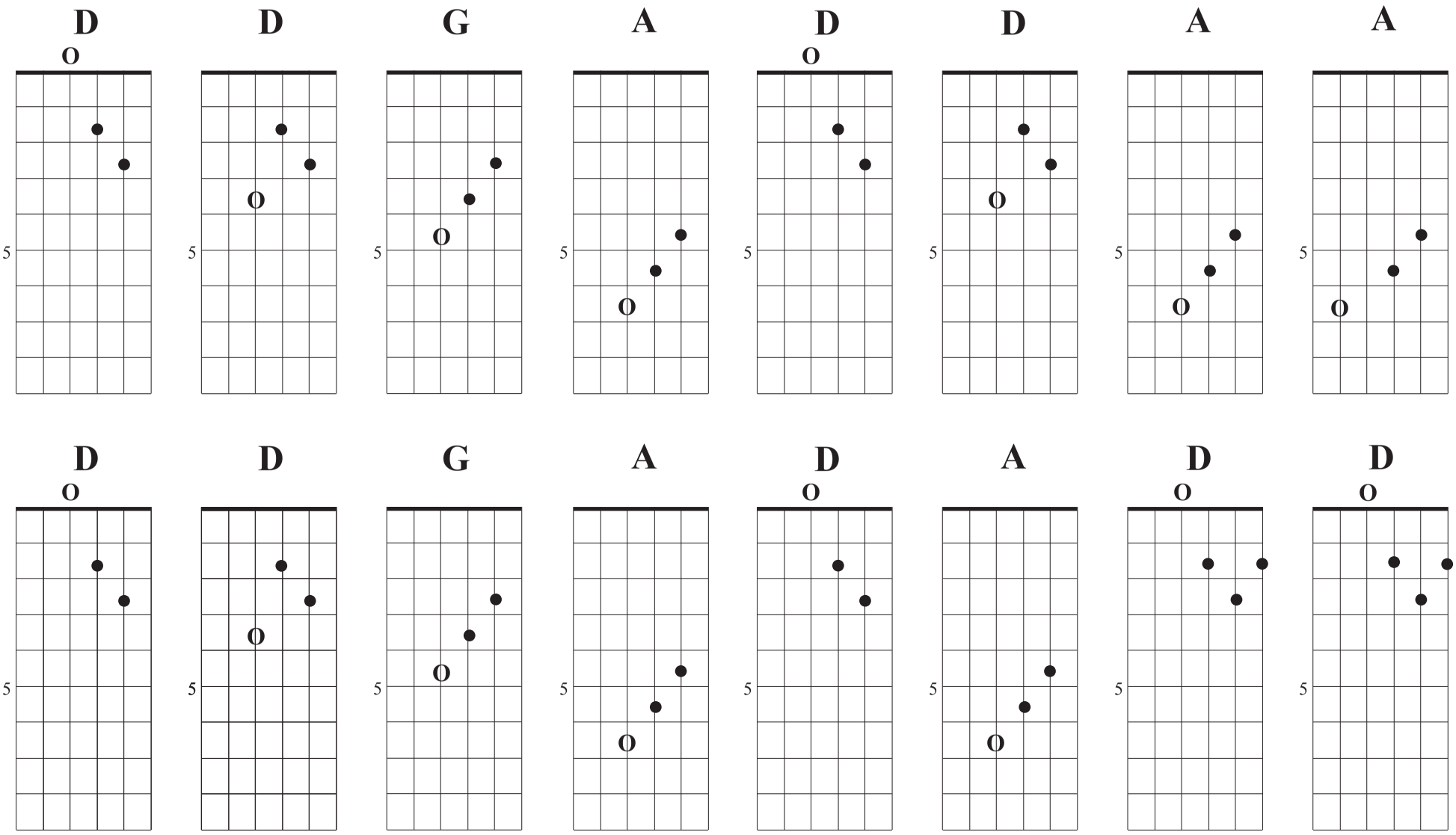
SOLDIER'S JOY—PART ONE

Audio CD
Tracks 42-43



HEY!! Please note that zeros on these charts DO NOT mean open strings; They indicate which note to use as your bass note. If the note is actually an open string, the zero appears above the nut.

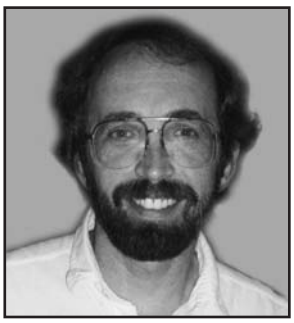
SOLDIER'S JOY—PART TWO



Exploring Bluegrass Guitar

Bluegrass Rhythm Guitar

by Steve Pottier



Reflections on Rhythm Guitar and Jimmy Martin

Jimmy Martin has been one of my favorite bluegrass performers since early on in my introduction to bluegrass. He's got that infectious beat, killer harmonies, top flight musicians in his band, and memorable songs. The Bear Family box set of Jimmy should be a high priority for purchase by any serious bluegrass aficionado. Long recognized as a master bluegrass rhythm guitar player, it really was driven home to me in 1995 when I saw him inducted into the IBMA Bluegrass Hall of Fame—but more on that later.

I started out in bluegrass with some simple assumptions about rhythm guitar: 1) it was easy and
2) consisted mostly of boom chuck boom chuck strums (or perhaps boom chucka boom chucka strums) with simple runs between chords and a G run at the end. I was sadly off the mark on both counts. When I finally got to see Jimmy Martin up close, I was dismayed to see him "kind of flail" at the guitar. I guess I hadn't been paying attention when I was listening to him before. I expected to see a precision goose-step boom-chick, instead of this strummy strummy right hand that I had always thought marked a folkie. I finally got Tom Adams, "Mr. Right Hand Man" on the banjo, to explain it to me.

Tom had gone from playing with Jimmy Martin for a couple of years to playing with the Johnson Mountain Boys. He said it took about six months of adjustment on his part to make changes in his rolls that fit the rhythm of the JMB. Keep in mind this is one great banjo player. What was different? The JMB had great rhythm- didn't they? (rhetorical question only—of course they did!) He explained it this way—and demonstrated on guitar with Audie Blaylock playing some mandolin rhythm as well. The JMB rhythm is founded on a Stanley type rhythm—heavy, steady guitar with heavy back beat and little or no up strums (see Example 1) or sometimes I hear what is depicted in Example 2—kind of a vague strum in the bass followed by a hard strum in the treble. Jimmy Martin's rhythm was more like what is shown in Example 3.

I listened as Audie changed his mandolin strum from strict offbeat chop to something similar to what Tom was doing, but emphasizing the offbeat where the chop would be. Tom said to keep the various parts of the strum pretty even. When they did this, they locked together in their rhythm—it was pretty dramatic. I can extrapolate to Sunny Mountain Boys-style banjo backup with a pretty continuous drone of eighth notes. It's easy to see why this works so well—everyone's got to be together on every part of the beat, and it works just like a clock. I started thinking about all of the banjo players the came into the Sunny Mountain Boys as good banjo players, and emerged as great banjo players, "time machines" as it were. They had to get right, or they would be off from Jimmy's timing!

But the JMB weren't exactly hacks- they had great band rhythm too. Dudley Connell's medium to fast tempo style is more like what is shown in Example 4 with a fair amount of left hand damping to get a more defined beat. One thing nice about the JMB is that the guitar is pretty out front , making it easier to hear just what is happening. Tom said the adjustment he had to make was not in good or bad timing, but in the kind of rolls and licks he had to use to complement this different style rhythm.

All this is to say that there is more to absorb than "boom chuck with a G run." That little seminar by Tom Adams made me realize there are really many styles of bluegrass rhythm guitar. Its worth some listening to acknowledged masters like Lester Flatt, Red Allen, Jimmy Martin, Edd Mayfield, Del McCoury and Carter Stanley. How are there styles different, and how does it work within their particular band context?

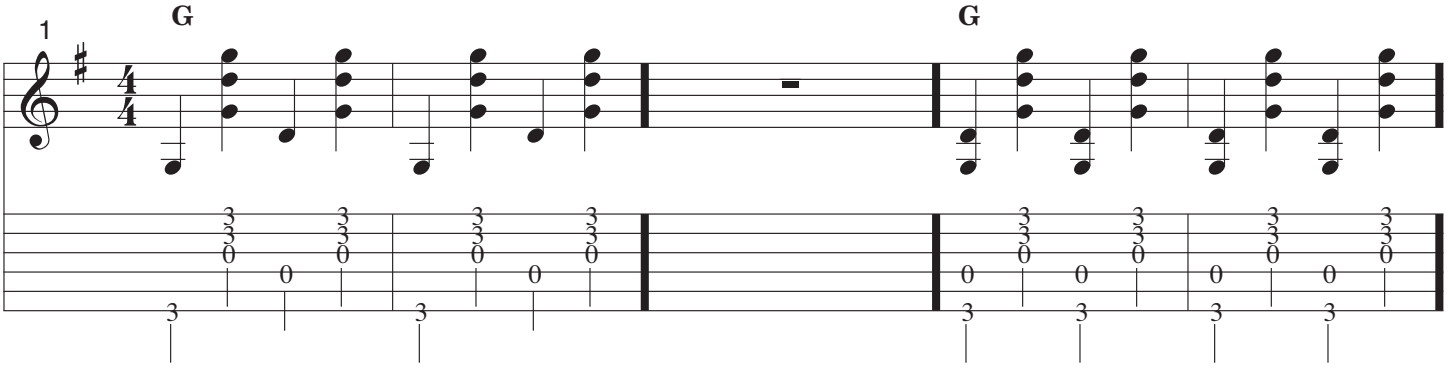
What is the banjo doing, what is the rhythmic line of the lead singer?

Also interesting for study are more modern players like Dudley Connell, Tony Rice, Wyatt Rice, Clarence White, Larry Sparks, Tim Stafford, Kenny Smith. How did electric bass change the way rhythm guitar players played? Kenny Smith told me once he liked to listen to what players play after they play the G run. I can recommend Chris Jones rhythm guitar video as one that conveys a deep understanding of bluegrass rhythm concepts, and a good place to start if you're looking for help.

But back to Jimmy Martin. I was at the IBMA Awards Ceremony in 1995 when Jimmy was inducted into the Hall of Fame. At the end of the ceremony, Ricky Skaggs led a tribute to Jimmy featuring many of the great musicians who have played in his bands- J.D. Crowe, Alan Munde, Bill Emerson, Charlie Warner, Paul Williams, Audie Blaylock, Tom Adams, and many others—maybe 20 or so in all. Ricky was leading them through some of Jimmy's famous songs and everyone sounded great. Part way through he called on Jimmy to come up and play some guitar, and not one to turn down such an opportunity, he did. Now keep in mind that on stage were some of the greatest musicians in bluegrass. Jimmy came on stage, strode up to the mike and started strumming, and the world changed. You can make up whatever story you want about why it happened- the mike was turned up for him, the musicians were sympathetic, etc., but suddenly the "band" came together with an incredible cohesive rhythm, all glued to Jimmy's rhythm guitar. I just about melted- "ohhhhh god, so that's how it is!!" When talking about bluegrass rhythm guitar, that's what *I'M* talking about!

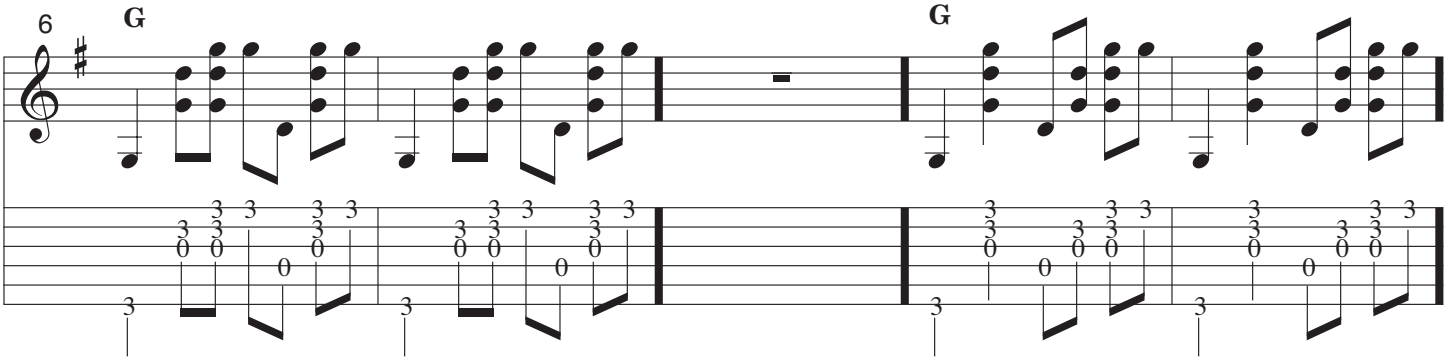
Rhythm Examples

Example 1



Example 2

Example 3



Example 4

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9. The Golden Slippers
10. Jimmie Brown the Newsboy
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13. I'll Love Nobody But You
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Winfield 2003

The National Flatpicking Guitar Championships at the Walnut Valley Festival

by David Dugas

As in previous year's contests, the competition level at the 2003 Walnut Valley flatpicking contest did not disappoint the audience or the contestants. With former champions and finalists competing this year such as Alan Shadd, Jason Shaw, and Steve Lewis (this year's first place Banjo finalist) the competition was fierce. This year there were a total of 39 entries from 22 different states in the flatpicking contest.

Third place went to Jason Shaw of Lincoln, Nebraska. Jason played his dad's 1956 Martin D-18 in the contest. As his prize, Jason chose the Martin D-28V guitar (which he mentioned to me that he loves). Jason previously won the flatpicking contest in 1993 and has been playing in contests since he was 6 on the fiddle and 16 on the guitar. He started playing the guitar at age 14 and the fiddle at age 4. When I asked Jason how he felt he played during the contest he answered that he played well and wasn't as nervous as in previous contests. The result of this was that he felt his playing was smoother, more relaxed and he was more focused during his performance.

Jason advised players new to contests to practice, know your tunes backwards and forwards and to play music with a lot of different people. One of the aspects that Jason likes best about coming to Winfield is the potential to play music with a lot of people that he wouldn't normally be able to pick with. Another aspect that Jason really likes about Winfield is that he's able to hear the usual assortment of tunes played in many different ways because folks from other regions of the country and from outside of the country attend the Walnut Valley Festival.

Second Place was awarded to Steve Lewis of Todd, North Carolina. Steve chose the Taylor PS-10 guitar for his prize. In the contest he played his early 1987 Brazilian/Appalachian Red Spruce Henderson. Steve said that the top came from 17 or 18 miles from his house, so it's a local guitar except for the Brazilian rosewood.

Steve played "Angeline the Baker" and "Alabama Jubilee" in the first round, "Sweet Georgia Brown" and "Crossing the Big Sandy" in the final round and "Red Haired Boy" after receiving his guitar and trophy.

When I asked Steve how he felt about his playing in the contest he replied that he felt positive about it, but even though he has entered numerous local and national contests over the years he feels he's not a contest type player and can rarely play his best in a contest situation. He doesn't have complicated versions worked out in advance. He will have ideas worked out on how he wants to play them, but he rarely plays anything exactly the same way twice. He feels that if you have a version chiseled in stone when you crash (as we all often do) you don't have anywhere to go. You don't have any recovery potential.

When asked how he approaches improvising, Steve responded that he tries to have an idea of where the tune is going at all times and "hugs" the melody. He keeps a working knowledge of the melody going in his head while he's improvising. Steve says "I may not follow the melody, but I'll always know where it's going."

In "Angeline the Baker," he changed some things around where he wants the tune to go. Sometimes a tune will be written for another instrument and will need to be modified to fit the guitar. If Steve wants to find out how a tune was played "back in the day," he'll find the album by Kenny Baker, or whomever, and learn how it was played by the source of the tune. As Steve says, in most old fiddle tunes the melodies

are so nice and moving they don't leave a lot of room for improvisation. They are so good they don't need a lot.

Steve has been entering major contests since 1998, but has been attending local fiddler's conventions since 1977 or 1978.

Steve's advice for folks interested in contests is: "You can do all the preparation in the world that you want to. You have to play what you want to hear and play what you are as a person. If you do that your strong points will come out and the judges will hear it. I'm not going to play someone's version note-for-note. I just don't do that. The judges are looking for original arrangements. They have heard everything out there by Mark O'Connor, Tony Rice, etc… If you do that, you are setting up to be judged by a standard against which won't work. You're not going to beat someone at their own game.

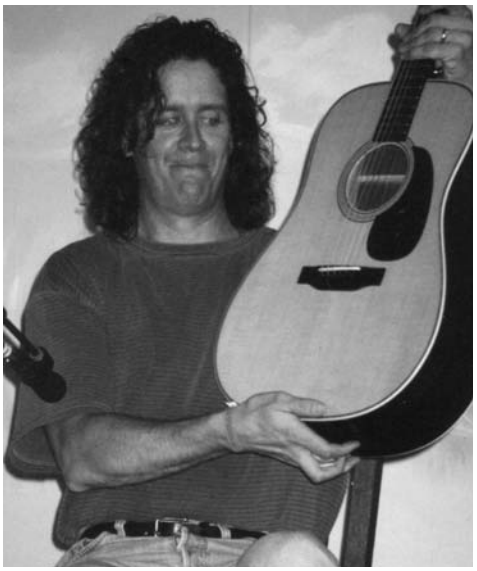
In preparation, play the local contests. It's about as close as you can get to Winfield, Henderson's festival, Merlefest, and Renofest and still give you the feeling of being up on the big stage."

And finally the first place finalist was Jeff Troxel of Cody, Wyoming. Jeff played his Collings D2H in the contest and chose the Collings Winfield as his prize. His other prizes included the first place trophy, belt buckle, string winder, Hat Man Jack hat, the Music Comfort chair (which Jeff loves!), a Fishman preamp and an Intellitouch tuner.

In the first round, Jeff played a slow version of "St Anne's Reel" and "Flowers of Edinburgh." In the final round he played a chord solo version of "Shenandoah" and "Goodbye Liza Jane" and played "Whiskey Before Breakfast" with former champ Adam Wright for his final tune.

When I asked Jeff how he felt about his playing in the contest he replied that he felt very prepared before the contest and that he had his arrangements down well. During the contest he felt he played OK, but as most of the players I spoke with, Jeff felt he didn't play as well in the contest as he has played in other performing situations.

Jeff's first contest was 2 years ago in the Wyoming State Flatpicking contest. He then went to Winfield and did not make the final cut. This year he won the Utah State Flatpicking Contest and then came to Winfield, which was his fourth contest.



First Place—Jeff Troxel

Second Place—Steve Lewis

Third Place—Jason Shaw

As a teacher, Jeff's advice for players new to contests is very similar to Jason and Steve's recommendations.

• Thoroughly prepare for the contest. Practice performing your tunes in front of people to get used to the nerves that performing in front of people brings. Pretend it's a classical contest and prepare as such.

• Play to your strength. For instance, I play mostly on the archtop guitar with lighter gauge strings, so I try to be more on the musical side then on the blazing fast side. Instead of making my goal to be the fastest guy at Winfield, my goal was to be the most musical guy at Winfield. I hope I achieved that goal.

• I teach quite a bit and with that in mind, I don't want my students to have speed as the only goal in their playing. I want to use dynamics, rubato and other musical devices in my playing.

• Make sure you have some variety in your tunes. Some tunes don't sound as appealing at faster tempos as they do at medium or slower tempos. I really like the idea of respecting where a tune wants to be played. For example, "Blackberry Blossom" and "Salt Creek" want to be played fast. "St Anne's Reel" on the other hand wants to be played slower, more melodically. When you are picking a slow tune, try to find one with some inherent beauty.

In closing, Jeff's final advice is if someone is going into a contest for the first time and they win, to please be humble. You are going into a contest where anyone else could have won. We really have to keep the festivals strong and respect the tradition inherent in these events and the music we play.

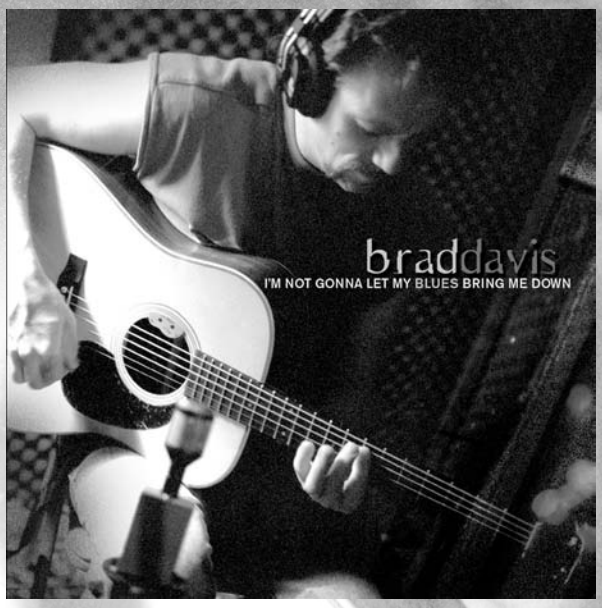
It was very revealing to me that each of the folks I spoke with in this article epitomized Jeff's final advice for contestants. Each of these men is humble and sharing in their music as can be hoped for in spite of their considerable talents. In my humble opinion, each of these folks epitomizes the spirit of the Walnut Valley Festival and continues the wonderful tradition inherent in our music. Thank you Jason, Steve and Jeff!!!

John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

Strong Fundamentals #6: Lady Be Good

Continuing from the bridge of "Lady Be Good," here are more swing chords to add variety to your playing. Next time, we'll look at some soloing possibilities.

John McGann lives and performs in Boston MA. He is a member of The Wayfaring Strangers (new CD This Train on Rounder), Joe Derrane (new CD due in the fall on MapleShade), Rust Farm, and many other bands. He can also figure out tunes and solos for you- check http://www.johnmcgann.com for details.



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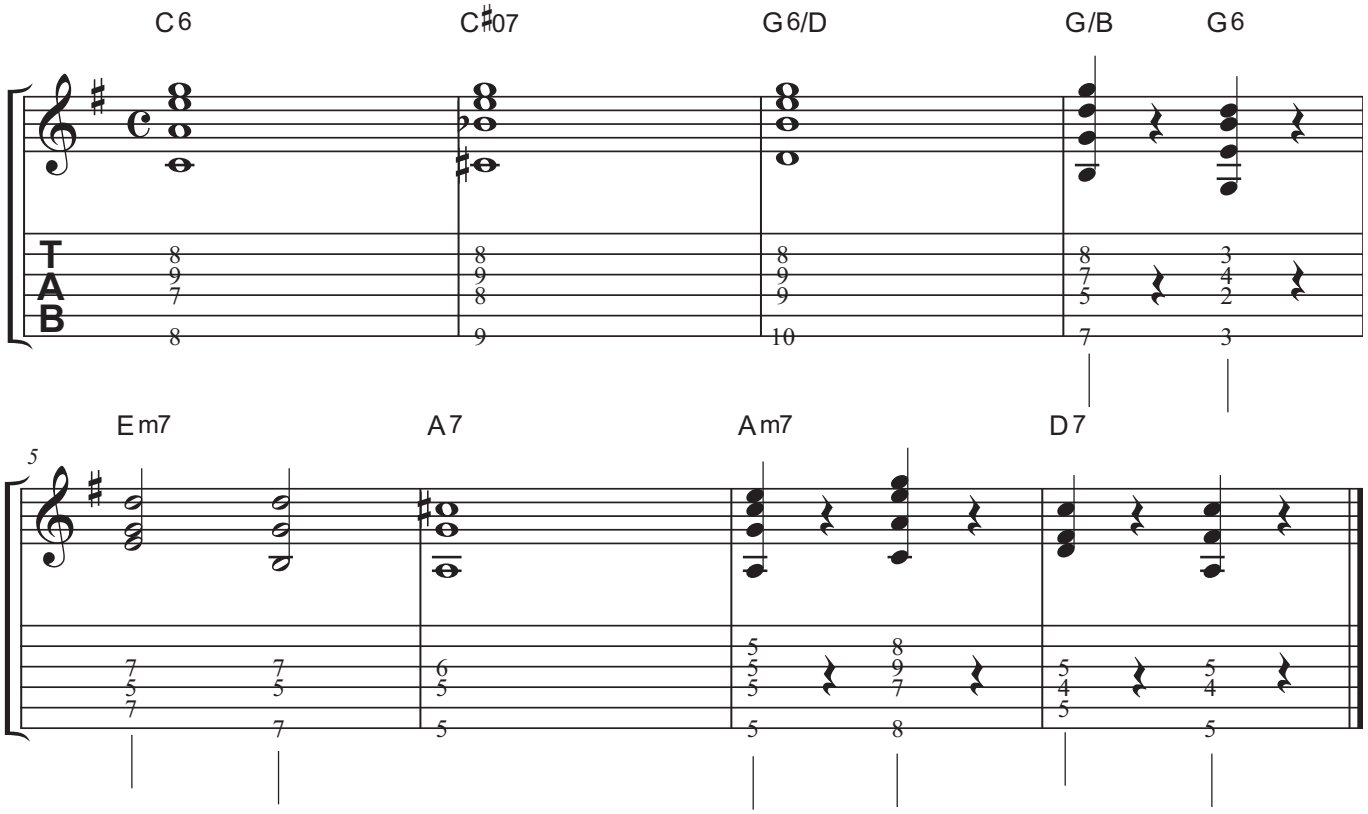
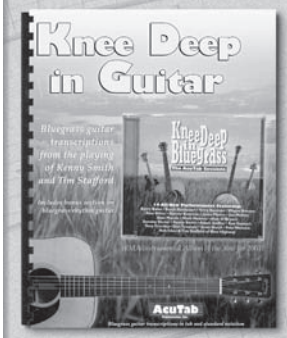
Audio CD
Tracks 44

Lady Be Good - Rhythm

Arranged by John McGann



Knee Deep In Guitar!



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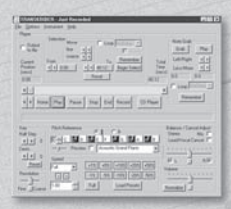

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New Release Highlight
Steve Lewis and The Guitar Extravaganza

by Dan Miller

Western North Carolina is famous for its musical tradition. And, thanks to many great guitar pickers—starting with Doc and Merle Watson and running all the way up through Bryan Sutton—its guitar players are also well-known. So when four of the most popular acoustic guitar players in the region get together for a show, it is a special event and one well worth recording. That's exactly how the new CD *The Guitar Extravaganza* came into being.

Steve clarifies the story behind *The Guitar Extravaganza*: "A few years back a fella who lived in Todd, North Carolina, bought the Todd General Store, which is an historic landmark. He was the most adept person at getting things together and getting them done that I had ever seen. He was able to acquire grants to do a summer music series. He asked me if we could do a guitar show. I said, 'That would be great. Steve Kilby is down at your jam here every Friday night. Let's ask him and also get Wayne Henderson and Randy Greer.' So it has become an annual 4th of July event." This year's event was recorded and the four pickers decided to release the project.

"The sound quality is OK," Steve explains. "I don't know that it was ever intended to be created for mass release or anything, but we had a pretty good soundman and good equipment, so it turned out pretty good. It was a fun thing. We just get together and play old war horses. We don't work up anything. We just sit around and pick and I think the majority of the people like to hear that."

What you get on this CD is akin to having four guys sitting around your living room and jamming on flatpicking standards—and the four guys just happen to be great pickers. On each cut all four players take two solos. The talking between songs was left on the CD to give it that live "at home" feel. The songs include: "Billy in the Lowground," "Blackberry Blossom," "Nothin' To It," "Nine Pound Hammer," "Little Rock Getaway," "Wildwood Flower," "Alabama Jubilee," "Forked Deer," "Gonna Lay Down My Old Guitar," "Freight Train," "Bye Bye Blues," "Jerusalem Ridge," "Cherokee Shuffle," and "Sweet Georgia Brown." It's

THE
GUITAR
Extravaganza
Wayne Henderson • Steve Kilby • Steve Lewis • Randy Greer
Recorded Live July 4, 2002 in Todd, North Carolina

a great list of standard tunes.

Each of the performers at this live event played their Henderson guitars. All in all, I liked this CD. The solos are strong and inventive and the song selection is good. The only down side is that the mix could have been better. With three rhythm guitars playing behind the soloist, the solo sometimes gets a little lost in the rhythm. Regardless, the CD is definitely a great study in how different players approach the tunes that are in the standard flatpicking repertoire.

We have featured Wayne Henderson and Steve Kilby in past issues of this magazine and I felt it was time for us to visit with Steve Lewis. After his strong showing at Winfield over the past four years, I have wanted to feature Steve in the magazine and the release of this CD provided the perfect opportunity.

Steve Lewis started playing music at the age of eight in his native Todd, North Carolina, after learning that some friends in the neighborhood were trying to play bluegrass. He says, "It was the peer thing. One friend was learning banjo and he was heavy into the Scruggs thing. We would listen to all of the albums and learn to play a little. At our first paying gig we got an album at a record store in Boone as our pay. It was the Tony Rice album that had the herringbone trim around it. The guy at the store said, 'You need to hear this guy.' "

Other than a few basic chords that his father showed him, Steve is a self-taught musician. When he first started learning how to play, Steve said his primary influence was Doc Watson. He remembers, "I only live 11 miles from where Doc lives, so everyone had Doc Watson albums lying around. That was a big plus, but it was also overwhelming when I first heard it. I said, 'I can never do that!' I initially started in just doing the rhythm thing."

After a couple years of playing rhythm guitar and banjo with his friends, Steve built up the confidence to start trying to play some lead guitar. The only way he knew how to learn was to listen to Doc Watson records and try to pick out what Doc was doing. He said, "I eventually got to where I could steal stuff off of TV shows, so I knew a lot of theme songs when I was about 12 or 13!"

At the age of twelve Steve and his young friends formed a band and began performing at cake walks, square dances, and fall festivals. Steve was the youngest member of the first band, which only stayed together about a year. Shortly thereafter he formed a band with kids that were closer to his age and they got a gig playing music for a group of cloggers. He said, "They were actually the world champion cloggers at the time and we traveled with them across the country."

A highlight for the young band was opening a show at Opryland for Lester Flatt in 1977. Steve got to meet Lester and Marty Stuart, who was just a few years older than Steve. Steve recalls, "I remember all them folks being real nice and Marty was the first good guitar player that I ever saw flatpick. He played lead on a few songs during the set. I had been stealing stuff off of albums up until then, but at that point I'd never actually seen somebody else do it."

After spending a few summers on the road backing up the cloggers, Steve played with a string of various bands around his hometown. The most notable of those bands was Ricochet, a band that recorded two albums for Rebel Records and had some cuts that hit the Bluegrass Unlimited charts. Initially, starting in 1988, Steve was the band's guitar player but he switched to banjo in 1991 when the banjo player left and Randy Greer came in to play guitar. As the band became more popular, and in more demand, Steve found it difficult to go out and play 50 or more dates a year, some of

them as far away from home as Las Vegas and California. He was holding down a day job as a house painter and the two careers became hard to juggle. The band folded in about 1996. Currently Steve plays banjo in a band called Alternate Roots.

Although Steve is most widely known outside of Western North Carolina for his strong and consistent showing at the National Flatpicking and Banjo contests in Winfield, Kansas, he says that he is not really a contest player and hasn't ever entered many contests. He first showed up in Winfield in 1999 and has placed in the top five in the guitar contest every year. In 1999, 2001, 2002, and 2003 he was one of the top three finishers in the National Flatpicking contest. This year he placed second in the flatpicking contest and won the banjo contest. The only other guitar contest that he has entered in recent years was at Merlefest where he placed second in 2002 and won first place in 2003.

Unlike many of the contest players (who spend months practicing precise arrangements of specific tunes that they have worked up for the contest), Steve doesn't prepare at all. He says, "I've never had enough ambition about me to be a contest picker. I don't sit down and work out contest tunes. I wish I could, but if I did I probably couldn't retain it enough to pull it off anyway." Steve doesn't decide what tunes he is going to play until he is the next player up on stage.

The guitar that Steve has shown up with at Winfield for the past four years is a very nice Brazilian Henderson Dreadnought that has consistently been the talk of players in the audience because of the volume, clarity, and tone that Steve gets from that guitar. Wayne Henderson built the guitar in 1987 and Steve has owned it since late 1988. Steve says, "It is way more guitar than I deserve. It is a tremendous guitar. It is very mic friendly and very balanced." Steve also owns a mahogany Henderson Dreadnought.

In addition to painting houses and playing in the band Steve teaches guitar lessons every Monday and Tuesday night. He maintains a roster of 12 students because he doesn't have the time to accept more. He currently has 60 people on his waiting list. When teaching, Steve spends the first two or three lessons on tuning, how to hold a pick, and basic chords. He moves on to teaching simple fiddle tunes a note at a time, talking students through the tune on a tape, and then teaching them variations to those tunes. He says, "I try to get them to think about variations on their own and listen so that they can hear where the tune is going."

When asked what common problems he encounters with flatpicking students, Steve says that most of his students have trouble playing hard enough to get sufficient volume while maintaining good tone and note clarity. To solve the problem he says, "I try to get them to hunt the sweet spot on the guitar and then I like for them to play the note as quickly as possible, regardless of the tempo—just get on it and off it." Steve is known for his combination of great tone and volume. He said that for him it came from trying to take guitar breaks and be heard at cake walks, fall festivals, and square dances with no sound system and standing beside people who had the world's loudest banjos. He said, "It just came from doing it and doing it." Steve prefers to use the rounded corner of a tortoise shell pick.

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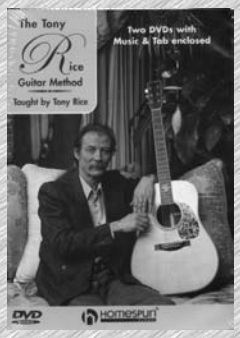

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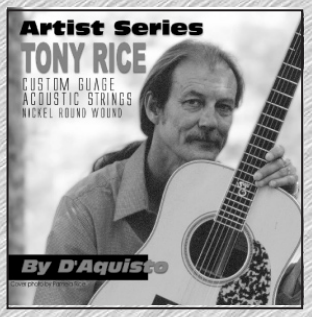
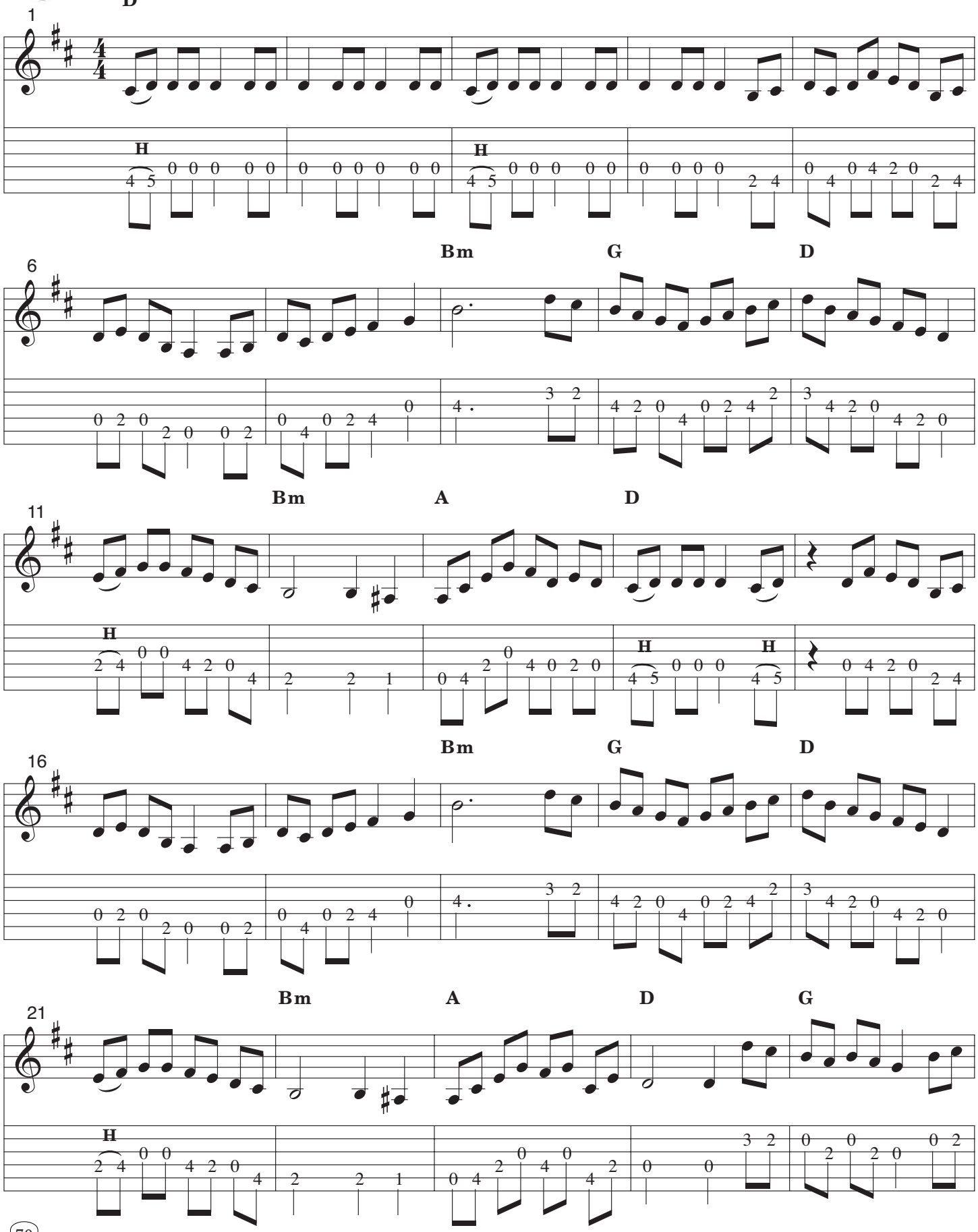


Cherokee Shuffle

Audio CD
Track 46

Arranged by Steve Lewis
Transcribed by Brad Davis

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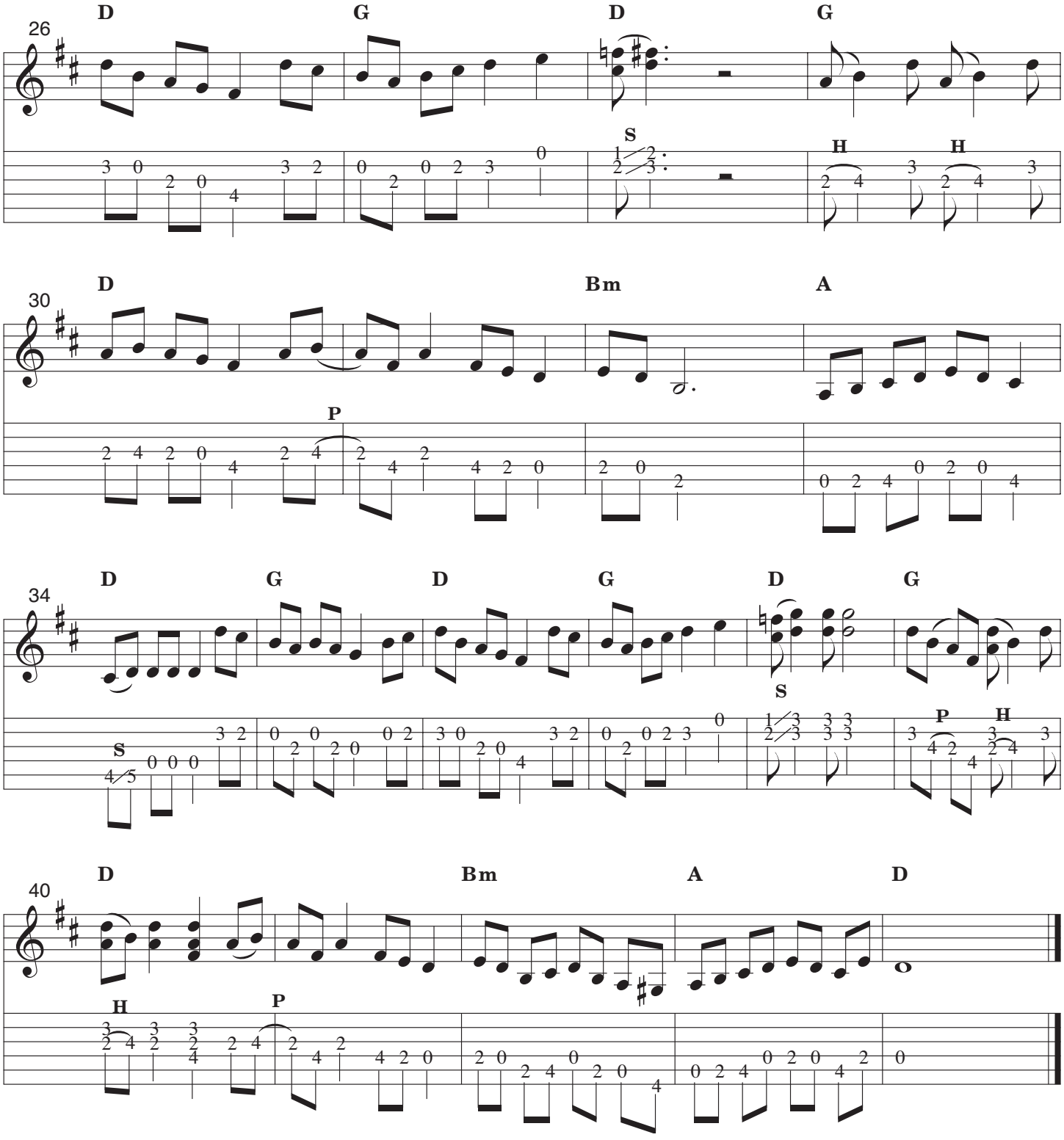

Reviews

Robert Shafer and Steve Kaufman: *Back Home*
SBR- 111502
www.flatpik.com

Robert Shafter and Robin Kessinger: *R & R*
JMP 204

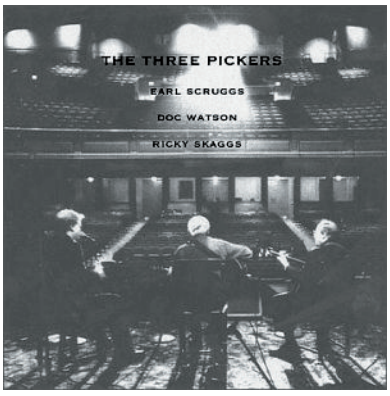
Reviewed by Bryan Kimsey

This double dose of Robert Shafer showed up in my mailbox and I promptly fired up the faithful CD player and settled down for some fine flatpicking. I wasn't disappointed. Both CDs are excellent and I can't give the nod to either one over the other. The Kessinger collaboration is possibly just a wee bit more traditional, but just barely. Both CDs have the full gamut of tunes from swing to fiddle tunes. Back Home reaches out a little farther and includes "Tico Taco No Fuba," as well as two waltzes ("Arizona Waltz" and "Dreamer's Waltz"). However, R & R has "Dinah" and "Gerry in Jamaica" as well as the great and vastly overlooked Mark O'Connor composition "Apple Butter." Swing tunes on Back Home include "Sweet Sue" and "Slipped Disc," while R & R boasts "Lime House Blues" and "Panhandle Rag."

Picking-wise, both discs are great. Each player has his own style and the only fault I can find is that R & R doesn't identify who is on which channel. R & R adds bass and mandolin (Johnny Staats), while Kaufman overdubs mandolin and bass rhythm on Back Home. The playing is hot but tasteful, especially on the slower numbers. If you listen closely, there are a lot of ideas on both discs, with some bends, lots of slides, some nifty syncopation, lightening fast triplets, and every thing else you can imagine (and some you probably can't!). And don't forget that even ten years ago you'd be hard-pressed to find this much guitar playing on any single album!

Now all you need is the Kessinger/ Kaufman CD Star of the County Down and you're set for a 3-way jam session!

***The Three Pickers* CD (CDRound0526) and DVD (DVRound0526)**



by Chris Thiessen

A while back, when Rounder Records issued its companion DVD for the *Alison Krauss + Union Station Live* CD, I sensed a marketing trend. Sure enough, Rounder has issued another CD-DVD pairing, this time for *The Three Pickers* concert held earlier this year at the newly restored RJ Reynolds theatre in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. You may have seen this concert televised on PBS: it featured Earl Scruggs, Doc Watson, and Ricky Skaggs (performing with their bands and as a trio) and was without a doubt a memorable and historic event.

The *Three Pickers* DVD presents that concert (about 62 minutes long, including two video cuts not seen on the PBS special), as well as a "documentary" interview with Earl, Doc, and Ricky that spans another 22 minutes. The *Three Pickers* CD contains almost all the music from the DVD ("John Hardy" is not on the CD), with an additional three tracks (one each for the picker's bands). There's a tremendous advantage to actually seeing these masters play—or replay—a specific lick. As a guitarist, of course I would have appreciated tighter shots on Doc's or Ricky's hands, but you can't have everything. (There was, however, at one point a superb lengthy shot of Ricky playing Monroe-esque downstrokes on his Loar. I can only suppose that cameraman was a Monroe devotee.) We're not going to have the national treasures that are Earl and Doc around forever, and this is a great opportunity to see them together for the first time, as many times as you want.

The most important question, of course, is whether this packaging strategy will encourage you purchase both the DVD and CD (the CD retails for $14, the DVD for $20). First, it's a handsome package. The CD booklet is well-produced, detailed, and informative, although the DVD booklet is not quite so robust. You actually get more music on the CD, although the visual advantage the DVD offers is substantial.

Given an unlimited music budget, buy both. Otherwise, ask for the DVD for the holidays and purchase the CD for yourself.

CD Song List: Scruggs/Watson/Skaggs: Feast Here Tonight; What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul?; Who Will Sing for Me; Soldier's Joy; Don't Let Your Deal Go Down; Pick Along; Scruggs/Watson/ Skaggs + Alison Krauss: The Storms Are On the Ocean; Down in the Valley to Pray; The Banks of the Ohio; Doc & Richard Watson: Walk On Boy; Daybreak Blues; Earl Scruggs with Family and Friends:

Doin' My Time; Earl's Breakdown; Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder: Ridin' That Midnight Train; Road to Spencer; Ensemble: Katy Hill, Foggy Mountain Top; Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms.

DVD Song List: Earl Scruggs with Family and Friends: Earl's Breakdown; Doc and Richard Watson: Walk on Boy; Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder: Road to Spencer; Scruggs/Watson/Skaggs: Pick Along; Feast Here Tonight; What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul?; Don't Let Your Deal Go Down; Who Will Sing for Me?; Soldier's Joy; What is a Home Without Love?; John Hardy; Scruggs/Watson/Skaggs + Alison Krauss: The Storms Are On the Ocean; Down in the Valley to Pray; The Banks of the Ohio; Ensemble: Katy Hill; Foggy Mountain Top; Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms.

The Dan Crary Capo

Reviewed by Dan Miller

When I got the new and improved Dan Crary model capo in the mail and wrapped it around my guitar neck at the second fret, I was impressed with its look, feel, and ease of use. Its fit was snug, its construction heavy-duty, and its look attractive. But still, when I called Dan on the phone to let him know the package had arrived, I had to ask, "Dan, why design a new capo?" I mean, a capo is a capo, right? Over the years I've used, and then lost, about a half dozen different varieties and felt like they were all about the same. After Dan answered my question I realized how much I did not know about the capo. Dan Crary knows capos.

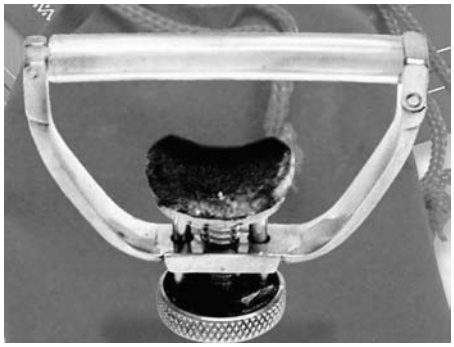
Dan said that the main reason he decided to design a new capo was that he has never found a capo that he liked. There was always some kind of problem with tuning distortion, wearing out of frets, inconsistency, instability, or durability. With his new design he has tried to overcome all of these difficulties and provide a capo that "looks bitchin' ".

Dan said, "All capos will distort the tuning, even this one." However, Dan wanted to minimize tuning distortion with his design. He felt like all spring-loaded clamp type capos put too much pressure on the strings and thus tuning distortion is a big problem with the spring-loaded design. He chose the thumbscrew design because there is more control over the amount of pressure that is placed on the strings.

The drawbacks Dan observed in the design of most thumbscrew type capos involved durability, control, and stability. Typically the screw would strip, or it would eventually pop through the center of the backing piece and pad, the thumb screw was too small to allow precise pressure control, and/or the backing piece was too small, thin, and unstable. To solve these problems Dan made a large, durable thumbscrew that is easy to turn and allows for more precise control over the amount of pressure that is placed on the strings. He said that in order to minimize tuning distortion when you put your capo on your guitar, you gradually increase the pressure while thumping on the strings. The instant that all buzzing disappears, you need not apply any more pressure.

In order to solve the stability problems Dan designed a large elongated backing piece and pad. He feels like the larger surface area adds to stability. When the backing piece and pad are too thin, or round, there is a tendency for the cross piece (the part that goes across the strings) to place uneven pressure on the strings, thus some strings will buzz and others will not. With his design the capo fits in such a way that there is evenness to the crosspiece fit and it doesn't skew side to side.

The addition of side posts that are place on either side of the thumbscrew also aid in durability and stability. With most thumbscrew type capos the screw is the only thing applying pressure and thus the pressure is just in the center of the backing piece. With Dan's design the pressure across the back is more even and the screw is less likely to wear out or strip.



Applying the right amount of pressure on the strings not only helps in reducing tuning distortion, it also helps the increase the life of your frets. Dan said that when the capo applies too much pressure on the strings, the hard strings pressing on the soft fret wire will make the frets wear out faster. Dan adds, "The tubing that we use on the cross piece grabs the strings tighter while remaining loose." Dan feels that some tubing that is used on capos is too rigid and thus does not "grab the strings." Tubing that is too rigid will also "drive the strings into the frets" and thus add to fret wear. Dan feels like the soft rubber used on some capos grab the strings too much and thus makes it hard to tune after the capo is placed on the neck. Dan feels like the tubing that is on the Dan Crary capo provides the correct balance of softness and firmness.

Some players do not like the thumbscrew capo design because it does not go on the guitar as fast as the spring loaded style capos. Dan feels that although the spring loaded capos go on faster, the time spent retuning the guitar with his capo is much less and thus getting to the place where you can start playing music is actually faster with his capo design.

If you are looking for a high-end capo, at $65.00 the Dan Crary model is a high quality, durable, and less expensive choice. You can find out more about ordering a Dan Crary capo at www.thunderation.com.

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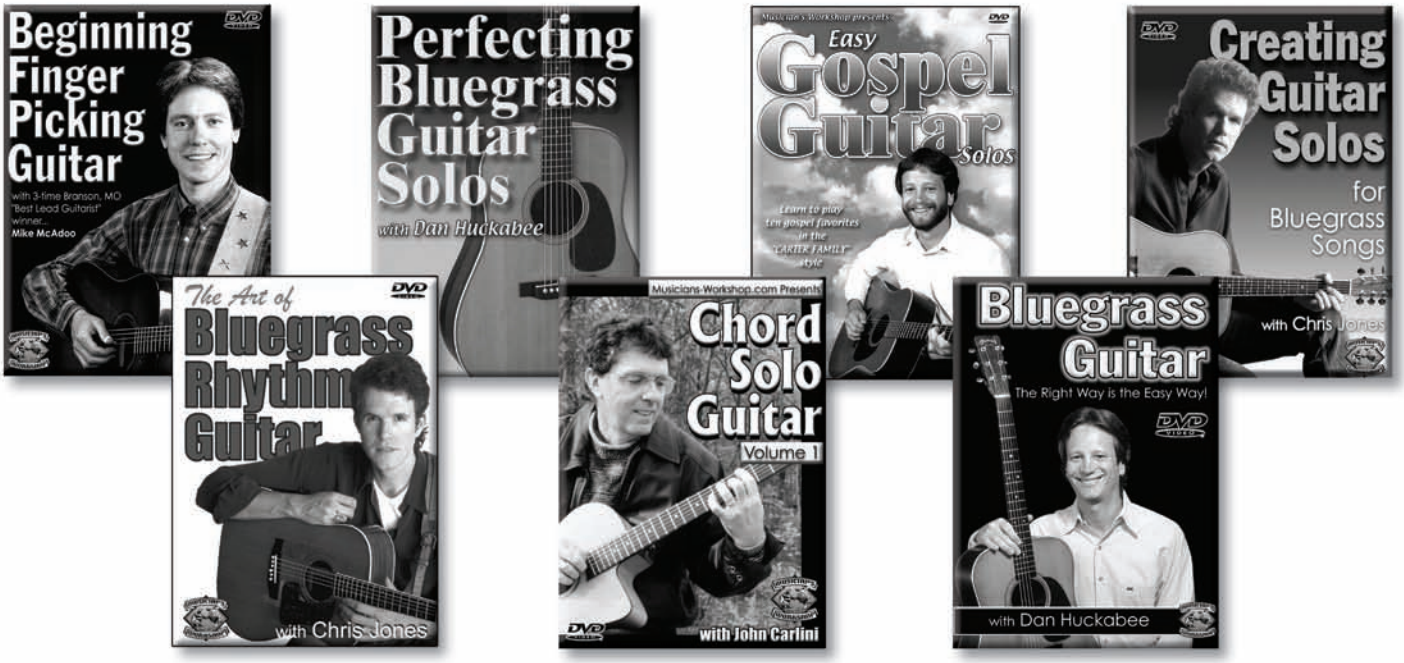
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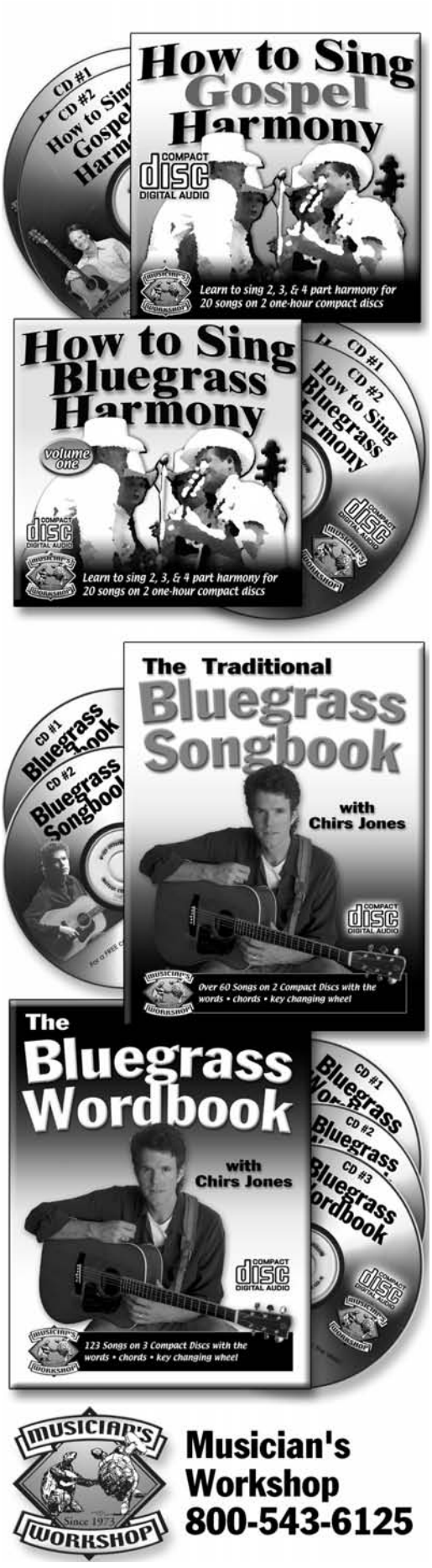
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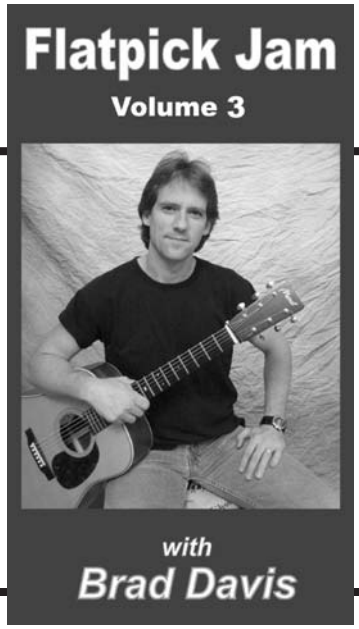

Volume 3 Songs: Katy Hill, Lonesome Road Blues, Cherokee Shuffle, Cattle In the Cane, Over the Waterfall, Coo Coo's Nest, Fisher's Hornpipe, Liberty, Texas Gales, Ragtime Annie, Redwing

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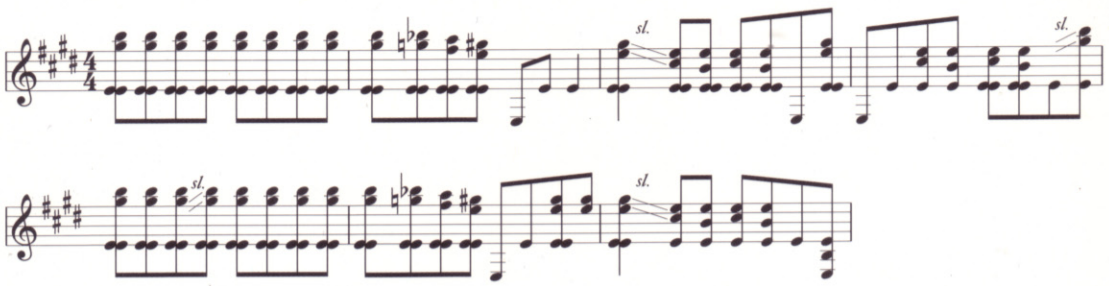
– performed live on a model D-45 in a muddy pasture
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